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Bowden, James

Religious education enforced  
in a series of family







# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ENFORCED

IN A SERIES OF

## **Family Conversations,**

WHEREIN THE

COVENANT RIGHT OF INFANTS,

AND

THE MODE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM,

ARE

CALMLY AND VERY SERIOUSLY  
CONSIDERED.

---

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ADDRESS TO PARENTS

*WHO ADMIT OF INFANT BAPTISM.*

---

*Written for the Use of the Author's Family,*

BY THE

LATE JAMES BOWDEN,

OF LOWER TOOTING.

---

*Now edited, with Corrections and Additions,*

BY THE

REV. B. RICHINGS, A.M.

CURATE OF DUNTON, LEICESTERSHIRE.

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These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest in the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. DEUT. vi. 6, 7.

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BOWDEN'S

**Family Conversations.**



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## THE EDITOR TO THE READER.

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*THAT the venerable Author of this excellent Publication had no other view than the instruction of his family and the benefit of his friends, is evident from its having so long remained a valuable acquisition to their libraries only. Fearless of criticism, and regardless of fame, no other reason can be assigned for its limited circulation, than that his peaceful soul shrunk from the tempestuous ocean of controversy.*

*By mere accident (if such a term may be allowed in a world wherein circumstances apparently trifling and incidental are, through the Divine Providence, frequently productive of events the most important,) this interesting little work fell into my hands; and, after an attentive perusal of its contents, I felt anxious to see it introduced to the world, in the hope that it might be instrumental in bringing "into the way of truth" some few, at least, of "such as have erred or are deceived."*

*The pious Author having entered into that "rest which remaineth for the people of God,"*

it occurred to me that the Son, walking in the ways of his Father, might easily be induced to extend a benefit he so well knew how to appreciate. On communicating my sentiments to him, I had the satisfaction to learn that my request had been anticipated by several persons, who, having been equally gratified by the perusal, felt, as it were, constrained to bear their testimony to its excellence, and to solicit its publication. In cheerful compliance with the wishes of his friends, Mr. Bowden fully intended to have edited the work himself; but a multiplicity of engagements preventing, he has kindly consigned it to one, who, while he laments that more than one opinion should ever have existed on the subject of Infant Baptism, rejoices in the opportunity of bringing into notice a work in which the right of Infants is so clearly established, and the duty of Parents so forcibly enjoined, in the practical and spiritual improvement made of the subject. I am aware that there are many judicious and valuable publications already extant on the subject, each of which, with regard to merit, has its respective claims: yet I make no doubt that the present work will meet with a favourable reception, from the spirit of Christian meekness, forbearance, and love, with which it is written; and be considered as tending to pro-



*mote this desirable end, viz. " That all those  
 " who profess Christ's holy name, may agree  
 " in the truth of his holy word, and live in  
 " unity and godly love." Regarding its own  
 intrinsic worth as the most forcible recommen-  
 dation, it only remains that I implore HIS bless-  
 ing upon it, who is " the same yesterday, to-day,  
 and for ever ;" and who, when he " visited us in  
 great humility," was much displeased with his  
 disciples, because they would have kept those  
 from bringing to him their infant offspring, to  
 whom he had bound himself, by an everlasting  
 covenant (which cannot be broken) to be a God  
 to them and to their seed.*

**THE EDITOR.**

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Handwritten text in a cursive script, continuing from the top section. This section also contains approximately 15 lines of text, which is mostly illegible. The handwriting is consistent with the top section, suggesting it is part of the same document.

## ADVERTISEMENT,

BY THE AUTHOR.

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THE following Conversations contain a specimen of spiritual food for young minds. It is here, on a grateful review of domestic scenes, or, like Abraham's banquet when Isaac was weaned, dedicated, by the Author, a memorial and thank-offering unto the God of his mercies. And at the same time it is presented as a pledge of tender affection to those who deserve much more abundantly at his hand, and from whom nothing within his power can be denied. The Lord be gracious unto them, and build them severally a house! or supply the failure of natural with spiritual seed! And may this table, thus furnished, remain many days undrawn; affording a savoury and beneficial repast unto children, and children's children, "in their generations."

The Author has not presumed to offer it to *the public*. Strangers might disrelish, and re-

ject it as light food. Yet no hedge is set about it. Nor will a seat at this table be unkindly refused to any individual of the family of God.

By no means is it the Author's design, in this work, to offend any of the generation of God's children. He could have had no expectation of producing an impression, by representations here given, on the minds of such as think and practise differently. His address, therefore, is to those of his friends who, in respect of infant baptism, are of one heart and soul with himself: stating those views of the great things of God against which they have no fixed prejudice. His wish is, by an illustration of *the promise*, to relieve their anxieties, and cherish their hopes, and aid their endeavours, in training up their children "in the nurture and admonition  
" of the Lord." He has no solicitude to determine the question relating to the quantity of water to be used in baptism; for since there is nothing saving in the quality, he is indifferent about the quantity. Nor would he have touched upon that sacrament in any controverted view of it, were it not for the relation in which it stands to what he deems at once the basis and most powerful instrument of religious education. Therein he has long beheld the precious and only ground of a parent's hope. On that

ground he himself stood before the Lord with the children of his care. And his very soul adores the mercy which in that *promise* gave him to find *a resting place*. That mercy has many years been his “song in the house of his pilgrimage;” and must be so

“While life, and thought, and being last,  
“Or immortality endures.”

It is of some importance that the most advantageous method be adopted of making use of these *Conversations*. In this regard the Author has to suggest a hint received, by letter, from his much-esteemed friend, Dr. Williams, written after perusing the greater part in manuscript. This he has permission to do in the Doctor's own words: which were committed to paper without a thought of their being made thus far public.

“Now, my dear Sir, I have the pleasure of  
“assuring you, that, in general, I am greatly  
“pleased with your performance. The plan of  
“A DOMESTIC DIALOGUE is a happy thought.  
“I took the hint, and, instead of perusing it in  
“my study, I read it to my wife and children in  
“the parlour, at different successive sittings;  
“which opportunities we all found both ple-  
“sant and profitable.

“ I hope, before it be long, to see it printed;  
 “ as I really believe it is calculated to please  
 “ and profit Christian families in no small de-  
 “ gree. And if the hint were suggested, that a  
 “ mode somewhat like that already mentioned  
 “ might be useful in families, in a preface or ad-  
 “ vertisement, it might not be amiss. By this  
 “ easy, pleasant method, the head of the family  
 “ might instil important sentiments, mingled  
 “ with pious improvements.

“ Wishing you and your dear family every  
 “ blessing of the new covenant,

“ I remain, dear Sir,

“ Your affectionate

“ Friend and brother,

*Rotherham.*

“ EDWARD WILLIAMS.”

In this work the Author avows his candour and impartiality in searching after and stating the mind of the Spirit in the word. He is not conscious of having *pressed* a single passage of Scripture into this service. Nor, when fairly discovered, will the continuance of any but volunteers be suffered. Sometimes he has availed himself of the labours of others — thankfully adopting such remarks as appeared likely to promote his important design. His views have risen far above controversy and conquest. And

should the God of salvation, by means of this feeble attempt, be pleased to awaken the mind, though but of one parent, to fidelity and diligence, and lead the young to be sober-minded and teachable, the glory will be *His*, the Author's end will be answered, and no one have reason to complain.





# RELIGIOUS EDUCATION,

&c. &c.

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## CONVERSATION I.

*Father.*

WELCOME, my dear children, to your affectionate father: and especially when, with a teachable spirit, you “incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart unto understanding.” I have pleasure in seeing you united and happy; and in contributing, by any means within my power, to your welfare in the present life. But “we look,” with more earnest heed, “at the things which are not seen; for they are eternal.” In this respect, on *your*, as well as on *my own* behalf, I regard the Gospel as a treasure beyond all estimation. Its provisions and appointments inspire a hope which has often given fervour to my supplications for you, mingled delight with the labours of my soul for your salvation, and sustained my mind under the painful expectation of leaving you in a world full of evil. By *provisions*, I mean grace and

peace, with all the blessings of the everlasting covenant, given unto us by Jesus Christ. And by *appointments*, you will understand, the ministry of the word and prayer, together with the sacraments of the New Testament, *baptism* and the *Lord's supper*.

*Son.* Through the tender mercy of God, it is our privilege to have some knowledge of the Gospel. Nor do we think lightly of the Gospel ministry. Something we have occasionally heard of *baptism*, and of our having been early dedicated to God in that ordinance. But the knowledge we have of the nature and design of that solemnity is general and very imperfect. For my own part, I need information. And, I think, we are all glad of an opportunity to ask, "What meaneth this service?"

*Father.* I meet that inquiry with pleasure. Nothing can be more important, interesting, or delightful. Nor have I a wish to impose an opinion concerning it, because it is mine. My heart's desire and prayer to God for you all is, that it may be given unto you rightly to understand the mind of the Spirit on this much-controverted subject. To me it appears, that in your dedication, severally, to God in your baptism, your parents, as your representatives, were fully directed and authorised, by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the word, to accept, on your behalf, a grant of mercy and favour, or execute a deed of trust, wherein the God of salvation tenders you the vast treasures of that

covenant, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," in so gracious a manner, that nothing but obstinate *unbelief* can exclude you from this glorious inheritance.

*Daughter.* May I then express my desire clearly to understand what that *unbelief* is, which alone can deprive me of a hope so divine?

*Father.* An unbeliever, my dear, resisteth the Holy Spirit revealing Christ and his salvation in the promises of the Gospel; and, with cold neglect, if not manifest contempt, "turneth away from *him* that speaketh from heaven." This dreadful sin of unbelief has always its seat in an *unenlightened mind*. "Having the understanding darkened," man is unacquainted with his deplorable state of helpless misery; and hence, in the pride of his heart, spurns at the overture of free mercy, and "goes about to establish his own righteousness." Sometimes, through the influence of temptation, the sinner, agonizing and trembling under a sense of guilt, regards his state as hopeless; he questions the truth of God in the promise of pardoning mercy; he cannot be persuaded of the ability of Christ to save him; perhaps he cries, "It is now too late; the door is shut." In such distressful cases, there is evidently wanting a just apprehension of the free and unmeasurable grace of God in Christ Jesus.

We cannot wonder that a man who is "alienated from the life of God," with a heart enslaved to sin and the world, should be an unbe-

liever. He cannot "savour the things that be of God;" cannot be reconciled to a life of practical godliness; cannot but undervalue the Gospel with all its treasures. Though "ready to perish," he "rejects the counsel of God against" himself: and perhaps, to obtain relief from the remonstrances of conscience, "denies the faith." and, with horrid impiety, proclaims "the truth of God to be a lie." "Take heed," my dear children, "lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God!"

*2d Son.* It is a great and interesting concern. I cannot resist the fear which my sister so deeply felt, "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it."

*3d Son.* That is a serious reflection! May none of us lose the impression of it! Yet, another thought strikes my mind. In a matter that involves every thing that relates to my dearest interest, I would fain see the *ground* of my expectation. I want the fact ascertained that, under a Divine warrant, such a promise is sealed on my behalf. I feel an earnest desire to receive evidence, demonstration, conviction. Excuse me, my dear father, if I beg to examine *the title deeds*; that I may feel the ground on which I stand, and possess a "hope that maketh not ashamed."

*Father.* You well know, that, in things relating to salvation, I never expect my children,

implicitly, to admit any opinion of *mine*. "Search the Scriptures;" revere the testimony of the Spirit of God in the word. I desire no more. Believe God; and, in these things, believe none else.

*3d Son.* I hope that, "with simplicity and godly sincerity," we are "asking the way to Zion." In this great inquiry, we wish to regard the Scriptures as our only infallible guide: yet we are bound to give thanks always for the aid of a father's knowledge and experience. We know that you would not flatter us with ungrounded expectations: yet we wish for Scripture-testimony. For my own part, I feel a solicitude to know what there is, under the hand of the Spirit of truth, to assure me that the eternal God has made and confirmed a grant or overture, on my behalf, of such transcendent grace and blessedness. I long to see where the promise stands which forms a sufficient ground for such a delightful expectation.

*Father.* I will tell you, my dear children, where is all *my* salvation, and what God has done to inspire my heart with exalted hope respecting *yours*. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." And when I have explained *the covenant of grace*, and the different dispensations of that covenant, I think you will be satisfied that I have not used flattering words in my reference to your concern therein.

*Son.* From what I have read and heard of the covenant of grace, I have been led to regard it as

a sacred agreement, from all eternity, between God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ; whereby, in consideration of the perfect obedience of Christ in our nature, and his atoning death, the deliverance and salvation of God's chosen people is provided for, and secured beyond all possibility of failure. You do not mean, that we individually, and all of us, assuredly, were parties contracted for in that covenant; and that our interest therein was recognized and attested in our baptism.

*Father.* My son, it is requisite that we distinguish between the *covenant* itself, and the *dispensation* of that covenant. The covenant, as it existed from eternity between the Father and the Son, had the salvation of sinners, "chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world," for its object. Its *conditions*, arduous indeed, applied only to their adored Representative. And its promises are absolute and sure. It therefore secures salvation to them beyond all possibility of failure. Of this eternal compact, the covenant of royalty with David was a figure. You will find many references to it in Scripture. Ps. lxxxix. 20, &c. Isa. liii. 10, 11. Isa. xlix. 8, 9. Isa. xlii. 1, &c. To the covenant, in this primary view, baptism has no immediate respect.

But the conditions being fulfilled, and "the Captain of salvation made perfect by suffering," *he* is constituted "heir of all things." "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell." The covenant is now "in the



"hands of the Mediator." Indeed, by anticipation, it was in his hands, as soon as sin entered into the world. By him, we conceive, an intimation of the grace of it was given even in Paradise; in that memorable declaration to the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Gen. iii. 15. This revelation of grace remained the ground of the sinner's hope, and the rule of his justification, for two thousand years. Then, while idolatry could boast of an almost universal triumph, and the true God was very little known, it pleased the Father of Mercies to give his covenant to *Abraham*. This *dispensation* of the covenant, in its immediate aspect, had a reference to Abraham and his natural seed, in the line of Isaac and Jacob. Yet, in a larger view, it embraced all nations, and all ages of the world. For a while, the grace of it was obscured by types and shadows. Afterwards, Christ being made perfect, the vail was removed, the shadows were dissipated, a more luminous and enlarged dispensation was granted, and the messengers were commissioned to "go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

*Son.* I think I have read, in the Book of Genesis, of a covenant which God made with Abraham, of inferior consideration, and relating to an earthly possession.

*Father.* Yes, in virtue of his own sovereign dominion over all the earth, God, at the same time, gave to Abraham, and his natural posterity, the Jews, a right to the land of Canaan, together with other privileges peculiar to themselves. You may read the account of this, Gen. xv. 18, &c.; Gen. xvii. 8; Gen. xxvi. 4; Gen. xxviii. 13.

But the other, that which eminently is the Abrahamic Covenant, is a grant of blessings transcendently rich and never failing; blessings designed to extend, not to Abraham's natural posterity only, but to all nations and all ages. The declarations in which this grace of God is expressed are full of everlasting consolation. Gen. xii. 2, 3: "In thee," Abraham, "shall all families of the earth be blessed." Gen. xvii. 7: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, *to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*" Gen. xxii. 16, 17, 18: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that, in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed, as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore. And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies: and *in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed*; because thou hast obeyed my voice." The same grant was



renewed to Isaac, Gen. xxvi. 4; and to Jacob, Gen. xxviii. 13, 14.

*Son.* I observe, that you speak of these covenants as if both were given to Abraham at the same time. Must we conclude, that the one has any dependence on the other? Or, that there is any connection between them?

*Father.* I do not wonder at your having noticed that circumstance. The condescending mercy of God is to be seen therein. The revelation of his gracious purpose was yet in its early dawn. In making known his will to men, God has been wont to speak to their senses; or, to accompany his declarations with visible signs. The truth of the first promise was wonderfully and very graciously confirmed by the translation of Enoch. And a striking illustration of the grace of it was granted in the ark of Noah. You will trace the like kind intention here. The things comprehended in the covenant which God gave unto Abraham, are unmeasurably glorious and eternal. But, they are matters of pure revelation. They are deep mysteries; which the reason of man could never have discovered, nor the heart of man, without supernatural instruction, ever have conceived. In this view, the secondary grant to Abraham, the grant of Canaan, deserves to be regarded with admiration. The faith of Abraham's posterity, in the great promise given to their fathers, was, in its operation through many succeeding generations, assisted by a continued address to their

senses. The land of Canaan, in possession, or in promise, exhibited a type of the "better country, even the heavenly." And, in the great things which God did for the Israelites, *they* might see and *we* may contemplate the wonderful operations of his providence and grace in favour of his visible church. There, "as in a glass," you behold, in strong characters, the mercy and truth, the wisdom and power of God, "in bringing many sons and daughters to glory."

*Daughter.* What a favourite of heaven was Abraham! What a privileged family was his! I cannot help admiring the grace of God in so great a promise.

*Father.* It was grace indeed! highly sovereign, rich, and free! It found Abraham in an idolatrous country, in an idolatrous family, and, for all we know, himself an idolater. See Josh. xxiv. 2. It found him a child of misery and wrath; and made him "rich in faith," and "the father of *believers*." The grant, at this time, given to Abraham, was a summary of whatever sinful man, condemned and helpless, stood in need; and of all that his capacities could receive and enjoy. It is true, the counsels of Heaven, relating to the way of salvation, remained under a veil. Yet, a Saviour was promised; and the family which should give him birth expressly marked. "In *thy* seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And, notwithstanding the veil that still obscured the method of salva-

tion, you cannot overlook the blessed hope, the strong consolation provided therein, for Abraham and his posterity, natural and spiritual. For, in this solemn transaction, the eternal God pledgeth his truth, to do *all* that infinite Perfection could do, to save and exalt every humble believer among them. He said, and swore, (Gen. xvii. 7), “I will establish my covenant  
“between me and thee, and thy seed after thee,  
“in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed  
“after thee.”

*2d Son.* Then, I conclude, you are satisfied that the covenant given to Abraham was the *covenant of grace*, the same with the *gospel*, which the apostles were commissioned to preach.

*Father.* Yes, I regard the grant to Abraham, as a *dispensation of the “covenant of grace;”* and comprehending whatever was “given us in  
“Christ Jesus before the world was.” It was revealed to Abraham and his natural posterity, the Jews, in their generations, as an overture and grant of mercy to be received by faith. The grant to the apostles, and by them to the church, in all nations and all ages, was a new dispensation of the same grace; opened in fuller discoveries, and more extended overtures. This is the revelation of “the mystery that had been,” comparatively, “hid from ages and generations,” the Gospel, “preached with the Holy Ghost sent  
“down from heaven.” The one is the “Old  
“Testament,” confirmed by the blood of sacri-

fices, divinely appointed. The other, the "New Testament," ratified by the death of Christ. It will, I think, hereafter appear, that circumcision and the passover were appointed seals of the *former*, as baptism and the Lord's supper, are of the *latter*. Both the one and the other is that which our Lord, by way of eminence, calls "*the truth*," the all-important precious truth, which he bore witness to in his ministry, sealed in his death, and which his Spirit, the Comforter, savingly unfolds and teaches. I speak of this matter as it appears to me. Consider what I say, and examine this matter well. There are inferences of importance to be deduced from it. Therefore, "to the law and to the testimony." We will make our appeal to "the Spirit of truth" in the word.

*Daughter.* Excuse, my dear father, my entreating a moment's forbearance. You have brought to my recollection a passage of Scripture which sometimes has been very pleasant to me. If I mistake not, it will support, and delightfully too, the sentiment you are stating. It is here, in Heb. vi. 13: "For when God made  
 " promise to Abraham, because he could swear by  
 " no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely  
 " blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying,  
 " I will multiply thee.—Wherein God, willing  
 " more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of pro-  
 " mise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed  
 " it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in  
 " which it was impossible for God to lie, we might

“ have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”

*Father.* My dear, the testimony of that Scripture is plain and express. It assures us, that what God said to Abraham, in his covenant promise, had a respect to distant ages and countries ; that it constitutes “ the hope set before us” in the Gospel ; that awakened minds, in the Apostles’ days, were encouraged, and in all succeeding ages, that sinners, surprized and distressed with a sense of guilt and wrath, have encouragement to flee thither with confidence ; and that “ strong consolation” is provided for them therein. It is a refuge, my dear children, for you, and for me ; the same refuge that blessed Abraham found. But grace, much more abounding, has now more fully prepared and opened the way thither. Our lively hope is encouraged by an exhibition of “ the love that God hath to us,” far very far exceeding all that Abraham’s heart could then conceive. In this passage, I think. I have the testimony of the Spirit of God to satisfy me that the Gospel of the New Testament is but an *improved edition* of the promise, the covenant, the oath, given to Abraham.

*3d Daughter.* One thing serves to explain another. I never, until now, could understand how the Apostle, associating Gentiles with himself, could represent Abraham as “ the father of “ us all.” Now, I begin to see wherein the relation stands, and how Gentile sinners, partaking

of Abraham's faith, inherit "the blessing of Abraham."

*Father.* My dear, you reason well. I am glad to find you read the word of God with attention. Abraham, in that solemn transaction, stood before God in a public capacity, the representative of all believers, Gentiles as well as Jews. The words, as recorded by Moses, are very explicit, (Gen. xvii. 4, 5.) "As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be called a *father of many nations*: neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham, for a *father of many nations* have I made thee." All this fully teaches, that the grant or overture to us, in the Gospel, is the very same with that made to Abraham; and that, if we are believers, we inherit the same rich blessing that his faith embraced. The Apostle has this express declaration, Gal. iii. 7, "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the *children of Abraham*;" or, as in ver. 9, "are *blessed with faithful Abraham*." And, in v. 13, 14, he teaches, in a very delightful manner, that the design of Christ in dying, was to secure this glorious inheritance to us, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us,"—"that the *blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Christ*: that we might receive the *promise of the Spirit, through faith*." In v. 29, he infers, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abra-



“ham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” After such testimony, who will doubt whether the covenant given to Abraham were a dispensation of the covenant of grace?

*Son.* It would ill become us, however, to go about to invalidate the testimony of the Spirit of truth, so fully expressed. I am now no longer at a loss for the Apostle’s meaning, when he tells us “the *Gospel was preached unto Abraham.*”

*Father.* It was Gospel indeed! It was a Gospel for *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*. It was a Gospel that comprehended the largest blessings that our miseries can need, or our faith receive.

Observe the Apostle’s words, v. 8. “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel to Abraham, saying, *In thee shall all nations be blessed.*”

There is one Scripture more that I wish you to mark with particular attention. It is recorded, Gal. iii. 15, 17: “Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: though it be a man’s covenant, yet, if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto;”—“and this I say, that *the covenant that was confirmed of God in Christ*, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” You see, the Apostle states, that Abraham’s covenant was “*confirmed of God in Christ.*” This is a representation that belongs to “the covenant of grace;” and I think to no other. We conclude, therefore, that

the promise given to Abraham, which God, in his amazing condescension, was likewise pleased to “confirm with an oath,” and, yet further to ratify by the ordinance of circumcision, was a dispensation of “the covenant of grace.” This remained, and must, through all succeeding ages remain, the ground and rule of the faith and hope of every believer. The Sinai Covenant, or the giving of the Law, followed after : but it did not, could not, disannul the original grant. The Law served only to illustrate the grace of it, and to awaken the mind of man to a sense of his need of it. “It was added because of transgression :” it was the thundering voice of the righteous Law-giver, rousing the guilty sinner, to listen to “the “still small voice” of mercy in the Gospel. It was “a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.”

Now, my dear children, this first and leading sentiment, I apprehend, needs no further support. “When God made the promise to Abraham,” *he therein, gave him a dispensation of that same covenant, which is more fully opened in the Gospel of the New Testament.*

Let us for a moment recapitulate and adjourn. The covenant given to Abraham is “the truth.” to which our Lord, in his ministry, and by his Spirit in his Apostles and Ministers, came to bear witness; therein, “the Gospel was preached “unto Abraham.” This promise or covenant, having been “confirmed of God in Christ,” still remains the ground on which every believer must stand before God, when seeking justification; it



is "the hope set before us" in the Gospel; it is "the promise of the Father;" for the more abundant grant of which, our ascending Lord commanded his Apostles to tarry at Jerusalem. It is "the blessing come upon us" Gentiles; and if we, by faith, receive this Gospel, Abraham is "the father of us all." These things, taken together, prove, I apprehend, beyond all reasonable doubt, that *the promise or covenant given to Abraham is the very same with the Gospel preached unto us.*

*Son.* It is enough. None of us can wish for testimony more full and satisfactory. The truth flashes irresistible conviction on our minds. We cannot be thankful enough for the pains our dear father has taken to set it before us. This part of the subject is clear. The promise given to Abraham, was a dispensation of that same covenant which is now more fully and delightfully published in the Gospel.

*Father.* You will well consider the observations that have been made on this important part of the subject, against our next meeting. The Lord grant you his light and his truth! Adieu!

## CONVERSATION II.

*Father.*

I THINK, my dear children, you need not another revisal of the arguments stated in our last conversation. You are satisfied, that the covenant given to Abraham was the same with the Gospel of the New Testament; the change being in the dispensation only.

*Son.* Truly, we need nothing further to give us satisfaction on that head.

I recollect, my dear father, you referred to the ordinance of *circumcision*: shall I ask, Was circumcision appointed to be the seal and token of this great promise given to Abraham? or, did it attach only to the covenant of beneficial blessings with which God was pleased to accompany it?

*2d Son.* My dear brother, if my abrupt intrusion may be suffered, at the first glance at the subject, I think I see that circumcision could not have been a sign and seal of advantages and obligations merely civil. Circumcision, if I rightly understand what I have read concerning it, had a relation to things spiritual. To whomsoever applied, it was a memorial of the depravity and sin of man's nature, of his need of sanc-

tification, his obligation to seek it, and his encouragement to expect it. It was therefore a fit seal of that covenant wherein Jehovah promised to be Israel's God, to take them for his peculiar people, to give them Christ, to pardon their sins, and cleanse their polluted natures. It was a fit token of the obligation they brought themselves under to embrace the promise, and to "put off" "the old man with his affections and lusts." I remember to have read of "the circumcision of the heart," I suppose that means *sanctification*.

*Father.* Yes, and circumcision, literally, without that "circumcision of the heart," could never avail unto salvation. Very plain and instructive, in this respect, is the Apostle's reasoning, (Rom. ii. 25,) "For circumcision, verily, "profiteth, if thou keep the law"—if thou hast a conscientious regard to the solemn vow that is upon thee; "but if thou be a breaker of the "law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." Then, verse 29, he adds, "For he is not a Jew;" failing in sacred obligation, he has no right to the special advantages of a Jew, "who" only "is one outwardly: neither is that circumcision, "which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, "who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of "the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, "whose praise is not of men, but of God." The Jewish people are often styled "the circumcision;" because, in distinction from the Gentiles, they were separated unto the Lord. In profes-

sion they were, what the redeemed of the Lord truly are, “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people.” To the same purpose the Apostle has this important declaration, “In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature:” and again asserts his claim; “We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh.” All these notices of the spiritual import of circumcision, prove it to have been the seal of the covenant that related especially to spiritual things.

*2d Son.* Thank you, Sir, for admitting my remark, and improving on it. I was self-condemned for the unbecoming abruptness with which it was offered, yet knew not how to suppress it.

*Father.* I wish no sentiment to be suppressed by either of you. On whatever subject we are conversing, open all your heart; with unrestrained liberty, speak all you think. I shall know the better how to assist your inquiries.

In connection with this remark, which was quite to the purpose, I will offer another, which deserves your notice. In the latter period, especially of the Jewish Church, there were many individuals, from the nations around them, who, under some restrictions, were associated with the Israelites in their sanctuary-service. By some means, they had gained the knowledge, and they revered the name of Israel's God:

they wished to share the privileges of his people ; and being circumcised after the manner of the Jews, they came up to Jerusalem from year to year to worship. Such, probably, were Naaman the Syrian, the Ethiopian eunuch, Cornelius the centurion, &c. You will observe of these, that their views were spiritual, *only* spiritual. Their circumcision gave them no claim to the civil advantages of the Jews ; they sought them not. Some of them had their earthly heritages in their own countries ; they were subjects of other governments ; but their hearts desired “ the blessing of Abraham ;” they embraced the promise ; and, by the appointed sign, they “ avouched the Lord to be their God.” This is another view in which we may see the relation that circumcision had to “ the covenant “ of grace.”

*Son.* This remark brings to my recollection a contest there seems to have been, in the Apostles’ days, respecting the use or disuse of circumcision.

*Father.* That was a debate of which the enemy of Christianity unhappily took advantage, to the great interruption of the peace of the Church, and the progress of the Gospel. We cannot wonder at the prejudices of the Jews in favour of an ordinance originally of God ; received, through many generations, from their fathers, and the badge of their nation. Yet, an injurious perversion of it was admitted. The Jews shewed a very great proneness, in the matter of

their justification before God, to overlook *the promise* given to their fathers. As if that promise had been disannulled or superseded by the giving of the Law, they practically cleaved to the *Sinai Covenant*, as their rule of acceptance with God; and, according to the tenor of it, they “went about to establish their own righteousness.” Thus, they perverted the design for which the law was added, and turned away from “the hope set before them.” It was a dangerous and a fatal error. Yet, cleaving to the covenant of works, and perhaps, though it seems improperly, regarding circumcision as the seal of that covenant, they fancied that rite to be of *perpetual obligation*. Hence it is said, (Acts xv. 1,) “Certain men which came down from Judea “to Antioch, taught the brethren,” even such as were converts to Christianity, from the Gentiles, “and said, Except ye be circumcised after the “manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” To resist this sentiment, the Apostles, in assembly at Jerusalem, passed a solemn decree. Teachers, of the same description followed at the heels of the Apostle Paul; endeavouring by this injurious leaven, to corrupt the Gospel he preached. The Apostle, knowing the natural pride of the heart of man, and his strong bias to the covenant of works, saw that herein he had a very powerful engine of the adversary of truth to demolish. Therefore, he “contends earnestly for the faith “once delivered to the saints.” He solemnly charges the Christian converts, Gal. v. 1, 2:



“ Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” You will observe, had the Jews regarded the seal of circumcision as securing to them the land of Canaan, with other civil advantages *only*, Gentile converts would of course have been excepted. But in all this debate, circumcision is considered as having a reference to a covenant, by which are to be obtained *the benefits of salvation*.

*3d Son.* I have felt the force of arguments arising from representations that have been brought forward to prove that circumcision was the appointed seal of the covenant of grace. Yet I have a little wondered that no appeal has been made to its *first institution*. Will not that determine whether it attaches to the great promise of salvation, or only to the promise of Canaan?

*Father.* Your brother’s ready and very pertinent remark, at the commencement of this part of the subject, led us into this train of reasoning; otherwise my first reference would have been to the original appointment of the ordinance. You will be satisfied, I think, that we had no reason to decline the examination of it. We have already signified, that the promise of Canaan, with other advantages peculiar to the seed of Abraham, seems to have been given, not as a distinct covenant, but as an appendage to the grant of

spiritual blessings : and designed to aid and encourage their faith. In the Gospel preached unto Abraham, and to his seed, Jehovah, delightfully exhibiting the riches of his grace, in effect said, " Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his " righteousness." In the promise of Canaan, he subjoined—" all other things shall be added " unto you." It was fit, therefore, that the same seal should be affixed to this one great charter. And this charter, uniting both in one comprehensive grant, seems to be that which St. Stephen calls (Acts vii. 8.) " the covenant of circumcision." However, turn to the record of the first institution of circumcision, and you will perceive, that it immediately follows the great promise of salvation. You will find it in Gen. xvii. 7—10 : " And I will establish my covenant between me " and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant : to be a " God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And " I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after " thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the " land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession : " and I will be their God. And God said unto " Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant there- " fore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their " generations. This is my covenant, which ye " shall keep between me and you, and thy seed " after thee ; every man-child among you shall " be circumcised."

It is here, I think, manifest that things spiritual and temporal are comprehended in one



promise or covenant ; and that circumcision was its appointed seal. This, with the preceding remarks, had been proof sufficient, even were there nothing further to offer. But there remains one passage of Scripture which, I believe, you will consider as putting the matter beyond all doubt. It is the Apostle's declaration concerning Abraham, in Rom. iv. 11: " And he " received the sign of circumcision, *a seal of the* " *righteousness of the faith*, which he had, being " yet uncircumcised ; that he might be the father " of all them that believe, though they be not cir- " cumcised ; that righteousness might be imputed " to them also." Here, it is evident that Abraham, before he was circumcised, had been possessed of righteousness, and justification of life, *by faith* ; that is, by his receiving, embracing the promise, the covenant, which God had given him. But no promise, no covenant, could be the ground of saving faith, but that which revealed salvation. The promise, therefore, of which circumcision was the seal, was the promise of life and salvation in Christ Jesus. And moreover, in this his faith, Abraham was " the " father of all them that believe" for salvation, " though they be not circumcised ;" the father of believing Gentiles as well as Jews. This, in my view, proves, beyond all reasonable objection, that circumcision was the seal of that dispensation of the covenant of grace which God was pleased to give to Abraham.

*Son.* Indeed, we dare not resist evidence *su*

clear, and immediately arising out of the word of God. But a question of importance follows close upon this, *Is it equally clear that baptism was instituted in the place of circumcision?*

*Father.* A few brief remarks will be sufficient to satisfy your judgment on that inquiry.

Observe particularly; we find baptism possessing the same place, in man's solemn transactions with God, that had been held by circumcision. Baptism is a seal of the covenant of grace, as we have proved circumcision to have been. The one a seal of the *New*, as the other was of the *Old* Testament dispensation of that covenant. And as circumcision had been, so baptism is, an *initiating*, an engrafting ordinance into the visible church; *therefore not to be repeated*. I will endeavour to set this more clearly before you. The Holy Spirit appears to me to have determined the matter beyond all reasonable contradiction. Observe, and give this circumstance due consideration:—By St. Peter, he makes the same promise the ground of *baptism*, which, by Moses, he had stated as the ground of *circumcision*. Moses represents the God of Abraham, as establishing his covenant with that venerable Patriarch, “to be a God unto” him, “and to his seed after him;” adding, “This “is my covenant” (*i. e.* the seal of my covenant) “which thou shalt keep between me and you, “and thy seed after thee, every man-child shall “be circumcised.” St. Peter, under the inspiration of the same Spirit, when he had effectuated

ally smitten the rocky hearts of our Lord's murderers, cries, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you—for *the promise* is unto you, and "unto your children." Here baptism is stated to be the seal of the very promise which, from the days of Abraham, had been confirmed by circumcision. The reference could not be to the promise of miraculous gifts; (Joel ii. 28.) That promise had already received its accomplishment. Those gifts would soon be discontinued: they were not applicable to the case of these distressed penitents. St. Peter, like an able surgeon, applied a remedy to their rent and wounded hearts, of sovereign virtue and efficacy; even "the blessing of Abraham," the promise, "the covenant confirmed of God in Christ." And, that they might have a strong consolation, he offered on the part of his Master, and in virtue of the commission which he had received, to affix to it the great and newly appointed seal of the kingdom of heaven.

*Son.* This is testimony indeed! *Baptism* by Divine ordination, in regard to the *great promise*, possesses the same place that *circumcision* many ages held.

*3d Daughter.* What a healing balm to their broken hearts! What an unexpected and surprising assurance! It was life from the dead. "With wicked hands they crucified the Lord of glory." But how shall we speak of the love of Jesus, who, with his own blood, made the pro-

mise of everlasting life sure to his very murderers!

*3d Son.* Happy Peter! what must his soul have felt while ministering such a cordial to sinners "ready to perish," and binding up, with so rich a balm, their bleeding wounds! What a glad messenger of this unexampled grace of his ascended Lord! What a delightful share must he have had in the joy of their salvation!

*2d Son.* Baptism was presented to my mind when you were representing the *spiritual import of circumcision*. I thought there was a remarkable agreement between them.

*Father.* Yes: baptism has the same reference to sanctification that circumcision had. It points at "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." It represents, at once, the great *blessing*, and the *obligation* of the covenant. It is evident they were instituted for the same purpose. And it is clear the Apostle saw things in this light, from the manner in which he has connected the mention of the one ordinance with the other, Col. ii. 11, 12: "In whom also we are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands; buried with him in baptism."

It is likewise worthy of remark, that, under the former dispensation of the covenant, *circumcision* was the initiating, and the *passover* the commemorating ordinance. Under the present dispensation, *baptism* is the initiating, and *the*

*sacred supper* the commemorating ordinance. We know that the Lord's supper, the commemorating ordinance, succeeded in the place of the passover. It is the plain meaning of the Apostle's words, 1 Cor. v. 7, 8: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast." Likewise circumcision, the initiating ordinance, being abolished; and baptism, having the same spiritual aspect, and being instituted for the same purpose; we are, surely, justified in concluding, that the one was intended to succeed the other. Judge, my dear children, for yourselves. Only, with impartiality, consider what is represented to you from the word of God.

*Son.* It is enough, my dear father. I speak without hesitation for one, and, I think, I have the concurrence of all. We are satisfied, that the covenant given to Abraham was a dispensation of the covenant of grace; that circumcision was the appointed seal of that covenant; and that, in the New-Testament dispensation of the covenant, baptism was instituted to succeed in its place. The great question yet remains. I long to hear what can be offered in justification of the practice of applying the seal of the covenant to *infants*?

*Father.* I hope we have discovered a *firm foundation*, on which to establish the covenant right of our infant seed. You have seen reason to be satisfied with the ground. I hope you will contemplate, with equal satisfaction, the deduc-

tions and illustrations that will form the *super-structure*. You have seen, and, I believe, are satisfied, that the covenant given to Abraham was a dispensation of the covenant of grace; that circumcision was the appointed seal of that covenant; and that, in the New-Testament dispensation of the same covenant, it has been the will of Christ to substitute baptism in its place. The right of infants to the *seal of the Gospel-dispensation of the covenant*, is our present question.

*3d Son.* I feel the weight of this question. And while your fatherly indulgence suffers my scruples, I would not rest till, with confidence, I can say, “*I have the mind of Christ.*” One thing seems needful to be ascertained. I wish clearly to understand, *who they were, under the former dispensation, whom the God of Israel required to be circumcised?*

*Father.* The promise, with all its inestimable advantages, was the free grant, or most gracious overture, of Heaven to Abraham, and to his natural seed, especially in the chosen line; Isaac and Jacob, and Jacob’s posterity. God, in his sovereign pleasure, was pleased to separate them unto himself. In that line, infants, “in their generations,” had a claim to the blessings comprehended in the great promise. For thus it is written, Gen. xvii. 7: “I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.” *Every male infant*, therefore,



among the tribes of Israel, through all generations, till the commencement of the Gospel dispensation, must be circumcised. The grace of God delightfully encouraged it. The authority of God required it. And neglect herein was treated as a contemptuous refusal of the blessing promised—"that soul shall be cut off from his people." There was nothing new in this appointment. It had been the pleasure of God to comprehend children with their parents, in whatever dispensation of grace he had before granted.

*2d Son.* One circumstance I have remarked with concern. It appears strange to me, that, for so many ages, no express provision should have been made for the admission of *female* infants into the kingdom of God.

*Father.* I cannot wonder that you should notice it. Perhaps the dispensation of more abundant grace we are under, has rendered that circumstance remarkable. Yet, in other transactions, is found the same distinction. It was so from the beginning. You will recollect the covenant of innocence was made, explicitly with *Adam*, as the representative of Eve, as well as of his and her posterity. The covenant of day and night was given to *Noah*. The covenant of grace was originally made with Christ, on the behalf of his bride, the church. The former dispensation, likewise, of that covenant, was given to *Abraham*. The man, in these several transactions, was considered as the head of the

woman. The woman was represented by the man; regarded as part of himself, and, with him, making "*one whole man*." In other respects, also, the distinction is to be traced. Among the animals chosen for sacrifice, the *males* were preferred. Of the first born of the Israelites, *males* only were to be separated unto the Lord. And, after the substitution of the tribe of Levi in their stead, *such* only were to be redeemed. In respect, likewise, of the offerings appointed for the maintenance of the priests, there were some denominated *most holy*, and of these, their *male* offspring only were suffered to partake with them; to the exclusion of their wives and daughters. The holiness of the latter, *i. e.* their dedication to God, being virtual and secondary only, not direct and formal. It is not fair to conclude that circumcision could not be the type of baptism, because the initiating rite was applied to the males only; for is not the antitype under the Gospel in every particular much more full and copious than its type? It was only a brazen serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness, yet it typified that Lamb of God which should take away the sins of the world, and who when he was lifted up should draw *all* men unto him. It was evidently the design of the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, to shew, that the shadow was theirs, the substance ours. If, then, baptism in the New Testament does not answer to circumcision under the Old, what does? It is not possible that there should be such a



shadow in the Law without its corresponding substance in the Gospel.

Notwithstanding the distinctions of male and female in outward respects, we have no reason to conclude, that, in the grant of "spiritual blessings in heavenly places," "the root and fatness of the good olive tree," the God of grace observed any difference between male and female. I have sometimes apprehended, that an intimation of grace, in this view, indiscriminating, is found in that special ordinance whereby it was enacted, that in default of male issue in any family of Israel, daughters should divide and possess the inheritance of their father. The five fatherless and brotherless daughters of Zelophehad, piously, we hope, deprecating an exemption to their father's family, from a portion in the land of promise, the type of heavenly rest, first presumed to state their hard case, in an appeal to the representative of the God of mercy. Moses brought their cause before Jehovah. The equity of their suit was at once admitted. The great Lawgiver of Israel, with a gracious smile, approved and granted their "heart's desire and prayer." And, immediately, gave orders, that the rule should be made perpetual, and be enrolled among the statute laws. It is likewise to be observed, that the Lord claimed the daughters of Israel for *his own*, and vindicated the wrongs which, through vile idolatry, were done them. See Deut. xxxii. 19.

The gracious regards of Heaven, however, are

now no longer limited. Restraints, that wore an unfriendly aspect, are done away. And, in the new and enlarged edition of the covenant, "there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free, there is neither *male* nor *female*, for we are all one in Christ." Gal. iii. 38.

*Son.* Precious Gospel, that smiles with equal grace upon all, of whatever nation, age, or sex! that leaves no neglected female, like "the son of the stranger," to sigh and say, "The Lord has utterly separated me from his people!" Charming truth! "We are all one in Christ!" All alike addressed in the promise, and alike admitted to the appointed seal.

*Daughter.* Thank you, brother. Your sisters are gratified by your generous and affectionate congratulation.

*3d Son.* Yet one circumstance staggers me. Baptism, it seems, was designed to be an *initiating ordinance*. In primitive times it was a seal affixed to a public profession. But, where Christianity is established, and infant baptism a general practice, that sacred rite will seldom be applied to *believers*; sinners, called by the grace of God, will rarely have recourse to it in assuming a public profession.

*Father.* Your remark is just.<sup>2</sup> Yet no objection can hence arise to infant baptism. Baptism, we have seen, takes the place of circumcision. Children are admitted as before. The vows of God are upon them. The promise smiles on their opening minds. And another ordinance

of admission, the Christian passover, presents itself, like an open door, sprinkled with blood Divine, to invite their public entry into the Christian Church. Hereby they recognize the solemn transaction of their parents on their behalf, and, subscribing with their own hand, enter their names among the followers of the Lamb. Moreover, as the sons of the stranger, when they came to put their trust under the shadow of the *Most High*, were, with their families, received by circumcision; so now, sinners, chosen out of the world, and made willing to be the Lord's, are, *with their children*, received into the New-Testament church by baptism.

Baptism, I wish you to observe, was no novelty in the church at the commencement of our Lord's ministry, or that of his herald, John. It was required of the Israelites previous to their solemn covenanting with God at Mount Sinai. Moses is commanded, Exod. xix. 10, "Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day "and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes." After this they were sprinkled with the blood of the covenant. We read of their having been "baptized unto Moses," before this, "in the "cloud and in the sea." Nay, and some suppose, not without reason, that the religious use of washing, or baptism, was much earlier than the institution of circumcision. It is, however, stated by ancient Jewish writers, that every proselyte from the heathen was received into the Old-Testament Church by *baptism*, together

with *circumcision* and *sacrifice*; males and females, parents and children, were baptized. Our Lord retained and established one only of these ordinances, setting aside the other two. Hence the Apostles would need no particular direction in respect either of the subject, or the mode of baptism. Well-known custom would be a sufficient directory\*.

*Son.* They are parallel cases. No objection on this ground, therefore, is found against baptizing infants.

*3d Son.* I confess my scruple is removed. Yet suffer, my dear father, one inquiry more; for I begin to find the subject interesting, beyond every idea I had before entertained. What is the *import* of the right application of the sign of the covenant, whether it be circumcision or baptism? What is the *advantage* it gives? And what is the *obligation* it enjoins?

*Father.* This question is truly important, and I am glad you feel it so. Circumcision to Abraham, as to every Jewish believer, was a confirming seal of that *promise* which his faith embraced; and of his own *engagement* to be the Lord's. But to Abraham's infant seed, "in "their generations," it gave no certain and *absolute interest* in covenant blessings; it effected no change in their state. It sealed and ratified

\* The use of baptism at the admission of proselytes having been disputed, I refer the reader to that rich fund of rabbinical information, Ainsworth's Annotations on Gen. xvii. 12, 13. Deut. xxi. 12; in which the fact is supported by good authorities.

the promise only as a conditional grant of salvation, on God's part, *unto* them ; and on the part of their parents, its acceptance *for* them. Thus subscribed, it was presented to their opening minds, and recommended to their believing acceptance. Herein was a token and pledge, by which God most graciously condescended to ratify and enforce the overture of the covenant with all its treasures. It furnished means and motives, and sweet constraints, whereby the God of salvation prevented, stood ready as it were to arrest the infant mind, to restrain the corruptions of the heart, and preclude the solicitations of the enemy. In the same delightful view we regard baptism. It gives no interest in covenant blessings, as they are connected with salvation : but it confirms a promise, or gracious overture, wherein the blessings of time and eternity are comprehended.

*2d Son.* This removes a difficulty which I was intending to mention. While contemplating the promise, the blessing of Abraham, and its gracious aspect on the families of the faithful, I felt oppressed by the testimony and the confession of the Apostle, (Eph. ii. 3)—“ and “ were, by nature, the children of wrath, even as “ others.”

*Father.* The promise, to the families of believers, inviting and delightful as its language is, presents itself only as a kind overture, with a gracious influence. It effects no change in our *state*, but when embraced by faith. It is,

upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, a cloud, wherein the Saviour comes and waits to grant the desire of every believing heart—"to command the blessing, even life for evermore."

*2d Son.* Then, we are all, like the rest of the world, in a state of sin and misery, till, by faith, we close with the most gracious overture of Christ and salvation in the promise. Precious faith! what a treasure it secures!

"I would believe thy promise, Lord,  
Oh! help my unbelief."

*3d Son.* Shall I ask, if the grace of this promise is not most affectionately and fully tendered *to all who hear the Gospel?*

*Father.* Yes, blessed be God, it is; and that with tender and importunate solicitations. Yet, more especially, God's covenant is with believers and their seed: and under the sanction of the heaven-appointed seal, its address is more pointed and powerful; it presents itself to the minds of the offspring of believers as a birthright, a family inheritance. Their names are found in that grant; God claims them for his own. It is calculated to invite the faith, the believing supplication, and the assiduous endeavour of tender *parents*; to encourage the humble hope, and the lisping prayer of the *infant mind*; to afford restraint in an hour of temptation; or cover with shame and confusion a profane Esau who has madly and impiously sold his birthright.

My dear children, the testimony, we have already discovered in the word of God, declares



*your* privilege, and reveals *my* joy. “The promise is to you!” God, who seeth in secret, knows what a precious ground of faith it has been to your parents, when your interest, both temporal and eternal, has lain near their hearts. Blessed be God! he is not unmindful of his covenant—“the oath which he swore to a thousand generations.” That promise, with all its immense, eternal treasures, waits your acceptance. It is a goodly heritage. I trust it will be, without one exception, “the joy and rejoicing of *your* hearts.”

*Daughter.* Truly, my dear father, we should be viler than Esau, and baser than the beasts that perish, if we could burst such bands asunder, and turn away from him, who, in the grace of such a promise, comes to solicit our hearts. Justly may St. Peter’s language be ours, “Lord, to whom should we go, but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life!” And has he said, he will be a Saviour, a Sanctifier, a Comforter to us—our Friend, our Father, our God, our “exceeding joy,” in time, and through all eternity? I think my prostrate soul would reply—

“Behold thy waiting servant, Lord,  
Devoted to thy fear:  
Remember and confirm thy word,  
For all my hopes are there!”

*3d Daughter.* My dear sister, if I can trust my present feeling, you have spoken the language of my heart. Never did I make another’s prayer mine own, by a more cordial “Amen!” And is this the birthright of which I have so

often heard—a birthright prepared to enrich a poor worthless, wretched sinner? Is this the goodly pearl with which my gracious Saviour has so long waited at the door of my heart? Ah, how despicable, compared with this, were the bracelets on Rebekah's hand, that charmed the eye of Laban! Nay, the brightest things below the skies lose all their lustre in the comparison! "Come in, thou blessed Saviour! I am ashamed, yea even confounded, while I remember how long thy love has endured my senseless indifference!" And is this the covenant into which my dear parents, in my baptism, affectionately and believingly entered my worthless name? How I bless the day wherein I was born—born of parents who loved my soul, and so early sought my salvation—born within the enclosure of such a covenant, the constraints of such grace! "Lord, thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time when their corn and wine increase!"

*Son.* I hope, my dear sisters, I have pleasantly and gratefully felt what you have so fervently expressed. I have "found a treasure hid in a field:" and, if I know my own heart, I am willing to sell all I have, to make this treasure my own. My soul, invited by this revelation of covenanted mercy, seems to say, "If God will be with me," according to his gracious promise, and will keep me in this way that I "would" go, "and will give me," though it were only "bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come to my" heavenly "father's



“house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God”  
—the unrivalled sovereign of my heart!

*Father.* Often, my dear children, have I found encouragement, in prayer, from that promise, which now is sweeter than honey to my taste, Isa. xlv. 3, 4, 5: “I will pour my Spirit  
“upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine off-  
“spring; and they shall spring up as among the  
“grass, as willows by the water courses. One  
“shall say, I am the Lord’s, and another shall  
“call upon the name of Jacob, and another shall  
“subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and  
“surname himself by the name of Israel.” Truly, the Lord is good. “Thou hast dealt well with  
“thy servant, O Lord, according unto thy word!  
“Thou hast given me the desire of mine heart,  
“and hast not withholden the request of my lips.”

*2d Son.* My heart, too, has felt a deep interest in the subject of these remarks; and I have participated of the grateful fervour with which they have been expressed. “My soul  
“doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath  
“rejoiced in God my Saviour!” “The lines are  
“fallen to me in pleasant places!”

I was about to start an objection: but there is scarce the shadow of it remaining. Indeed, I know not how I could have thought of asking—What *benefit* can arise to children from a transaction in which they are incapable of bearing a part, and of the design of which they can have no apprehension?

*Father.* Indeed, I cannot but wonder that an

objection of this nature should have been seriously and so often made. What reflecting mind would doubt whether unconscious infancy can be benefited by the entail of worldly estates and immunities? Or smile, with contempt, at the idea of advantage derived to new-born babes from covenants previously signed on their behalf? When the devout Israelite appeared to recognize the interest of his male infant, but eight days old, in the covenant granted to their fathers, by the sacred rite of circumcision, who, but a profane scoffer, would ask, "What advantage hath the Jew? and what profit is there of circumcision?"

*3d Son.* Excuse me, Sir; there is a thought on this subject, which has somewhat embarrassed my mind. "If we regard the great Gospel-promise as partaking of the nature of a covenant, and if baptism be the seal of it, is it not requisite that parties admitted into that covenant should understand the obligations of it, and be capable of signifying their consent?"

*Father.* Recollect the appointment of Heaven, and the practice of the church under the former dispensation of that covenant, and you will see, that, notwithstanding its obligations, the applying of the solemn seal to unconscious infancy is no novelty or impropriety. We have gifts of nature; and we are laid under obligations by them. They meet us at our entrance on life, when we have not ability to signify our assent to the obligations they imply: yet, the doom of

the “wicked and slothful servant” will be ours, if those returns of grateful duty be neglected. Esau is branded as a “profane person,” because, having a birthright, he contemptuously sold it, with “the pearl of great price” it contained. At eight days old, Isaac received the seal of the covenant. And what ability could he then have to signify his consent? Our children are born under a most gracious dispensation of the covenant: and why may not their privileges and obligations, without their knowledge and consent, be recognized and confirmed by the wonted seal? It will belong to their riper years to inquire, “What mean ye by this “service?”—to admire the grace, and acknowledge the obligation. Indeed, “how shall *they* “escape who neglect so great salvation!”

*3d Son.* Yet I perceive, in the commission given to the Apostles, our Lord directs them to “go and *teach* all nations;” *then*, to baptize them; being first brought to the knowledge and faith of the Gospel. And, if instruction and profession be required to precede baptism, infants can have no claim.

*Father.* Reflect a moment, and your good sense will tell you, that, when the Apostles were sent among the heathen to gather converts to Christianity, no other method could be taken. Those strangers to the purpose and grace of God must first be led into the knowledge of the Gospel, and profess faith in Christ, before they could be received into his church. Yet

the consideration which made it necessary that they should first be taught, contains nothing to invalidate the right of their children to be admitted, with their believing parents, by baptism. Whoever undertakes to evangelize the heathen must, of necessity, proceed according to the letter of the apostolic commission. Yet this by no means argues against the right of infants. The rule and order of the covenant remains still unaltered. Proselytes to the Jewish religion were first taught; and when received into the church, by circumcision, as hinted before, *their offspring were* received with them.

*2d Daughter.* I believe, brother, plausible as at first your objection seemed, you are now satisfied that, when brought to the test, it contains nothing to militate against the right of infants. To me there appears a necessity that *Abraham* should understand the covenant, before he came under the bond of it; but *Isaac* could have no such qualification. The Apostles “commanded, that, if any would not work, “neither should he eat.” I hope you do not think that helpless infants were deprived of food by so hard a condition.

*Father.* Be it, likewise, remembered, that the Apostles were *Jews*. They knew that, in the dispensation of the grace of God granted to their fathers, children were included. They knew that they had partaken with them in the benefit of the passover, the deliverance from Egypt, and the miraculous and typical

provision in the wilderness. They knew that, in every solemn transaction, they “stood before the Lord, with *their little ones*, “their wives, and their children.” 2 Chron. xx. 13. “Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, “call a solemn assembly: gather the people, “sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, “*gáther the children, and those that suck the “breasts.*” Joel ii. 15, 16 They knew that their law required that the Israelite who had waxen poor, and sold himself to one of his brethren, should, in the year of jubilee, be at liberty “to depart, “both he *and his children with him*, and return “to his own family, and into the possession of “his fathers.” Lev. xxv. 41. And the Apostles would interpret the words of their commission *as Jews*. Therefore, knowing that it had never been the practice of the church of the Old Testament to exclude infants from the initiating sign, it is not reasonable to suppose that they would proceed to such a measure without a direction more explicit than their commission contains. I know not, therefore, how the Apostles could understand their Master in any sense that excluded infants.

I wish you, also, to observe, before we close, that the word \* here rendered “teach,” is not to be limited to giving instruction. It is, on the most ample testimony, “Go *disciple* all “nations”—“bring them into my school, and

\* μαθητευσατε, very different from διδασκοντες, ver. 20.

apply to them the badge of my scholars." Nothing like the exclusion of infants is found in the Apostles' commission. The invariable practice, in God's house, of comprehending children with their parents, would readily determine their Master's intent. Their minds would, at once, refer to the use of the former seal of the covenant. Nor could they have forgotten the rule respecting proselytes from the Gentiles: "Whenever a stranger shall sojourn  
 "with thee, and will keep the passover to the  
 "Lord, *let all his males be circumcised*, and then  
 "let him come near and keep it; and he shall be  
 "as one born in the land." Exod. xii. 48.

I think you are furnished with sufficient observation for pleasant reflection. The Spirit of truth be your teacher! Adieu!

## CONVERSATION III.

*Father.*

“THEN,” my dear children, “shall ye know, if “ye follow on to know the Lord.” Truth, already, seems to pierce the clouds, and shed its influence. It has, I think, appeared to demonstration, that the covenant given to Abraham was the same with the Gospel of the New Testament; that circumcision was the appointed sign or seal of that covenant; that this rite was applied to infants under the Old Testament dispensation; and that baptism, under the Gospel, takes the place of circumcision. Some remarks have been offered to shew that the Apostles would consider themselves as instructed by their great Master, to apply this sacred rite to believers *and their infant seed*.

*3d Son.* Yet the words of the commission are, “Go, *disciple* all nations, baptizing them;” and it follows, “he that *believeth*, and is baptized, shall be saved.” Peter requires a similar qualification, Acts ii. 38: “*Repent* and be baptized.” Does it not seem to be intended by our Lord, and understood by his Apostles, that the nations must *first* be taught, and repent, and by faith receive the Gospel, in order to their



being baptized? And therefore that, by this law, infants are excluded?

*Father.* These conditions, and that of Philip, in respect of the Ethiopian eunuch, “if thou *believest* with all thy heart, thou mayest” be baptized, are applicable to persons of full age; not to infants. I cannot suppose that any sober-minded person would presume to interpret, after such a manner, that solemn declaration of our Lord, “he that believeth not, shall be “damned:” and regard it as importing the exclusion of dying infants, without exception, from the state of the blessed. Yet, (and in this regard it is a very serious reflection,) the promise, sealed in baptism, is the *only* channel through which the grace of God can be savingly conveyed to them. How diligent, and, at the same time, how deliberate should we be in investigating Divine truth! How should every Christian parent “stand in the ways and see, and “ask for the old paths, where is the good way,” before he comes to the melancholy conclusion of withholding from his children the sign and seal of that covenant which by faith he should be continually laying hold of, both for himself and them. Under the Law, the command of administering the outward and visible sign was sanctioned, by the most awful threatening. It was for the neglect of this that the Lord met with Moses, and threatened to slay his son. And is there, then, nothing criminal under the Gospel in withholding, I should rather say in rejecting,



the seal of the covenant?—Doubtless the children of such parents, dying in their infancy, are left to the *uncovenanted* mercy of God. We may, however, hope that the infant finds its Heavenly Father more kind and merciful than its earthly parent. In wilfully withholding the seal, we do, as it were, *tempt* the Lord our God to withhold from them the spiritual and eternal blessings of the covenant. To dedicate our children, without administering to them the seal which God hath appointed, is *altogether unscriptural*. We may say to our Baptist brethren, “Who hath required this at your hand?” If nothing is to be done for the spiritual good of our children, but what they are sensible of, then we may all agree not only in omitting to baptize them, but also *to pray for them*. “I see not,” says Matthew Henry, “how those parents can with equal confidence pray for their children, who deny them to be in covenant, and so set them upon even ground with the children of infidels.”—The ground on which the rite of baptism is by any denied to infants, is said to be their want of faith; though infants were circumcised without any faith in, or knowledge of, the God of their fathers. On this one point lies the stress of the argument on the part of the Baptists\*. Indeed, almost the whole of their argument cen-

\* Instead of the word “Antipædobaptists,” the Editor has substituted the term Baptists, as being more familiar, though certainly not so correct.

ters here. It is of importance, therefore, that we carefully examine and try their reasoning on these expressions, and see how far their conclusions are according to truth. You will remember it has already appeared, that infants are capable of being benefited by a visible covenant-relation to God and his people; that they had been interested in the covenant of grace, under its former dispensation; that this their interest had been uniformly in their generations recognized and ratified by the appointed seal; that they stand in need of, and are as capable of receiving the grace of the covenant now, as in the days of Abraham. Therefore, if no such interest or relation remain, under the Gospel-dispensation, it is fair to conclude there must have interposed a law of exclusion. It is, therefore, a matter of serious inquiry, whether such a law be found in the apostolic commission, or, in any instructions given by our Lord to his Apostles? It is said to be in the former: perhaps without good reason.

That the Apostles should be directed *first* to teach, and *then* to baptize the instructed, was evidently rational and expedient. The matter of inquiry is, when believing parents were initiated into the Christian Church, whether the words of the commission would determine the exclusion of their infant offspring? For my own part, I see nothing in the commission that can reasonably be so interpreted. On the other hand, I think it will be found to

contain a great deal in support of a different sentiment. However, as plainly and fairly as in my power, I will set the matter before you; and the Spirit of truth, I trust, will be your teacher.

Observe; the Apostles were to introduce a new dispensation of the Covenant of Grace. In order to this, they were, by preaching, to publish the grace of that covenant more fully and delightfully than under the former dispensation, and to make a free overture of its inestimable benefits to Gentiles as well as Jews; inviting sinful men indefinitely to come into the bond of the covenant. You will judge for yourselves, whether in this there was any thing that would lead the Apostles, who were *Jews*, and as such acquainted with the state of things under the former dispensation of the same covenant, to regard the *children* of Christian believers as excepted in the commission to baptize? In forming your judgment, my dear children, turn your views to the ancestors of the Apostles. Once, they were groaning under cruel oppression in Egypt. Thither Moses, God's commissioned servant and Apostle, came preaching to them deliverance; telling them, that God had seen their sorrows and remembered his covenant; that he would save them from their oppressors, and lead them to the promised land; and called them to "keep the passover and the sprinkling of blood," with an assurance of salvation, if obedient to this heavenly vision. This Gospel which Moses pro-

claimed, represented in a lively manner the tidings of great joy which the Apostles published. But did it ever enter the heart of Israel's Deliverer to overlook *their infant seed* in this promised mercy? Or, does it appear, that such a thought entered the heart of Moses? Yet Moses was sent *first* to teach, and to require the obedience of faith. Infants were not capable of professing faith, or even of understanding the Gospel then preached. But we all know they were not excluded from the protection of the sprinkled blood: when their parents marched out of Egypt, they formed a part of the joyful procession; and parents and children were, together, "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and "in the sea."—Now apply this to gospel times. The Gospel which the Apostles preached, is "the glorious Gospel of our Lord and Saviour "Jesus Christ;" that of Moses, while it bore a resemblance, was but the shadow of it. Then, if Moses, exhibiting the shadow and similitude of the grace of the Gospel, regarded the offspring of God's professing people, as comprehended, with their parents, in the favour of Heaven; if they shared the benefit of his embassy, and were afterward, with them, baptized unto Moses; is not the conclusion unavoidable, that the Apostles, who proclaimed "the truth"—the transcendent grace of the Gospel—would proceed according to the same established rule?

*Son.* They could do no otherwise, without an explicit restriction from their Master.

*Father.* Then, let us advance further; for I wish you to see this matter, if possible, in a yet stronger light. Let us contemplate the solemn *covenant-transaction at Mount Sinai*. There the Law was published: it was addressed to *adults*, who were capable of understanding what the Lord their God required of them. Their assent was expected, and given: "All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do, and be obedient." The solemn seal of that covenant was then applied; "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people, according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and *sprinkled* both the book and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.'—But had infants no concern in this transaction? They professed no obedience: nor could they understand the conditions required: many of them were unconscious of what was doing. But had they no part in the covenant? Or were they excluded from the sign? Then why were their parents so solemnly enjoined to *teach* them early, and *instruct* them diligently, and earnestly *command* them to keep the words of this law? And, moreover, let the venerable Mediator of that covenant be heard: he will put the matter beyond all doubt. When *their fathers were no more*, *Moses, addressing these children*, says, Deut. v. 2, 3, 4, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us

“in Horeb. The Lord made not a covenant with  
 “our fathers (only,) but with *us*, even us, who are  
 “all of us alive this day. The Lord talked with  
 “*you* face to face, in the mount, out of the midst  
 “of the fire.”

The order of things does not appear to be varied. Faith in the promise of covenant-blessings was required as much under the Old Testament as the New. The parents' faith received the promise for themselves and for their children. And they were together admitted to the sacred sign.

*2d Son.* These are parallel cases; and the conclusion, in favour of infants, is irresistible.

*Father.* And what shall we say of the language of the commission in a further view? “Go, “disciple *all nations*.” Do infants make no part of nations? Are nations to be disciplined, or proselyted by applying the badge to parents, and making no account of children? Are chartered rights, and benefits secured by a prince's coronation, restricted to adults? Was this ever the way of the Lord? When we read such forms of expression as these: “In thy seed shall all “*families* of the earth be blessed”—“So shall he “sprinkle many *nations*”—“All *nations* shall “call him blessed”—how shall these promises be understood, but as having a very gracious aspect on the infant members of households and nations receiving the Gospel? Excluding these, who constitute a great part of every nation, how could nations be disciplined? Besides, if they can



be *saved*, why not *discipled*? If not excluded from the *blessing* of the covenant, why denied the *seal*?

*Daughter*. Indeed, I begin to regard the claim of infants with conviction. An argument in their favour appears to arise out of almost every word of the apostolic commission. Your objections, brother, seem to be driven like chaff before the wind. The testimony of Scripture has hitherto been found so strong in their favour, it must, I think, prevail to silence every further scruple.

*3d Son*. My dear sister, I long and labour, not for victory, but for truth. Her manifestation, through clouds and darkness, is more welcome than the rising day. I have diligently, and, I hope, impartially, attended hitherto to the whole argument: I have examined and pondered every observation, with an earnest desire and prayer to know the mind of the Spirit; and I bow to the all-conquering power of truth.

*3d Daughter*. How could men of piety, especially tender and loving parents, think of espousing the contrary sentiment? Strange that, against the testimony of Scripture so clear and full, it should have gained credit!

*2d Daughter*. As far as we have proceeded, I think I see, in the light of Scripture, “a manifestation of the truth.” And, while entertaining, and rejoicing in it, I cannot help reflecting; and I hope, Sir, it will not be deemed improper if I mention the thought that strikes me. “If in-



fants, under the present dispensation of the covenant, have not a right to the seal, as under the former, then, the privileges of God's professing people, as they respect their families, are very seriously abridged under the Gospel."

*Father.* My dear, that is a reflection that has often, and very deeply, struck my mind. And I have greatly wondered that any affectionate and believing parents should so easily accede to the exclusion of their offspring, from that covenant relation to God which had been the privilege of the seed of God's ancient people. After the grant to Abraham and his seed, in their generations, supposing myself to have been a Jewish inquirer, in the days of the Apostles, how could I have listened, without a sigh, to its messengers stating, that, "if I were a believer, God would assuredly be a God to *me*; but no longer to my *seed*? that *I* should belong to the church of Christ, and live under the benign influence of the covenant-promise; but that *my children* must be classed among the unbaptized and unclean?" How must *godly parents* have felt? How must *Jewish converts* have complained, and *infidels* blasphemed? Yet it does not appear that the Gospel ever suffered reproach; or that Christian believers had any remonstrance to offer on this behalf. It does not appear that there arose any question about it. And hence we are justified in concluding that the children of God's professing people held the same place in the church, under the Christian, as under the

Jewish dispensation. *Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? A God in the same manner, in the same latitude and extent to us, as he was to them?*

*3d Son.* You will excuse my troubling you with my scruples. I wish the testimony more complete. If our Lord meant that infants should be admitted to baptism, with their professing parents, I cannot but wonder that he did not accompany the Apostles' commission with an explicit direction to that effect.

*Father.* My dear, it is no strange thing, in the institutions of our Lord, to find some particulars left without explicit and definite instructions. It is to be observed in the *law of the Sabbath*. It is so in what relates to the *discipline of the church*: and, in other things of inferior concern. This involves no impeachment of the wisdom, the goodness, or the equity of the Divine Legislator. The seeming deficiency is readily supplied out of former establishments; or his sacred pleasure gathered from other Scriptures. You will find a difference, in this respect, between those laws and ordinances that are *merely positive*, and those which are properly, or in part, *moral*.

*3d Son.* Positive institutions, if I rightly apprehend, are those that originate only in the sovereign will of the Lawgiver. Have I been mistaken, in considering circumcision and baptism of this number? Yet, had baptism been an ordinance merely positive, it would, I conclude,

have been introduced with a declaration of the will of our Lord, in every respect, so explicit as to supersede all controversy, and form an unquestionable rule of duty.

*Father.* Circumcision and baptism, with too little consideration, I apprehend, have been called positive institutions. They partake of the nature of positive institutions, on moral grounds. This is evident respecting baptism. You will observe, that qualifications are expected in adult subjects which belong to no institution merely positive. To me it appears, that the question is not—*Is baptism to be regarded as a positive institution?* But *have we, in the apostolic commission, a full and explicit directory, in respect of the subject and the mode of baptism?* It is manifest we have not. The language is concise, general, and indefinite. The claim of infants, established in “the Gospel preached to Abraham,” and enjoyed and prized, from generation to generation, in the Old-Testament Church, is neither discharged nor confirmed in the apostolic commission: it seems to be regarded as that which would follow of course; or we are left to gather the mind of the Holy Spirit concerning it from other Scriptures. The like observation will be made in respect of *the mode of baptism*, should Providence favour us with opportunity of further discussion.

*Son.* You hinted, Sir, at *the law of the Sabbath*: is that law, in any particulars, indefinite?

*Father.* Undoubtedly it is. And a little ob-

servation of it will serve to illustrate the remark we have made. The Fourth Commandment, as far as it relates to the worship which God requires, is moral. What relates to a portion of time to be set apart for that purpose, is positive. But positive institutions terminated with the Jewish dispensation. And, in the ordinance of the Christian Sabbath, it has been the good pleasure of the great Lawgiver to supply the deficiency with no express and definite instructions. It seems to be left to the reason and piety of the church to deduce, from certain premises, what the will of the Lord is: particularly, in respect to *the identical part of time* which is to be sacred unto him. Just so it is in the institution of baptism. As far as it relates to the profession of our faith in Christ, and our subjection to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, it is of a *moral nature*. The sign or token, the washing with water, appointed to declare this profession and subjection, is *positive*. Yet there are various particulars, relating to the *subject* and the *mode*, concerning which our Lord, in his infinite wisdom, has seen fit to withhold a definite explanation of his will.

*Son.* This, brother, must be admitted, in order to account for the diversity of sentiment that prevails on the subject: and in justification of the conduct of the wisest and best of men, and of the practice of almost the whole church for many ages. Had the original institution of baptism been on record, and its expression definite, to the exclusion of infants, there would

have been no room for disputation: godly men, in this matter, would have had but one opinion.

*Father.* My dear children, though the infant seed of God's people be not expressly mentioned in the Apostles' commission, yet the words contain no *exclusion*. From many a satisfactory intimation, heaven-instructed parents have gathered that it is not their Saviour's will that they should be excluded. The testimony of the Spirit of Christ is various and strong. Indeed, had the practice of baptizing infants been a prostitution of the ordinance, it is not easy to suppose that the Spirit of truth and grace would have suffered it to prevail so generally, so long, and in the brightest days of the church's prosperity. And be it remembered, the privilege, in the estimation of godly parents, has been highly valued, and the practice peculiarly delightful. God has condescended to grant them many a token of his acceptance in it: and they have reaped an abundant harvest of joy from it.

*3d Son.* There is real weight in these considerations, and I very sensibly feel it. Yet my mind craves demonstration. I wish to know how far the Spirit of Christ, in the word, appears to justify the practice of baptizing infants?

*Father.* I think we have seen, in a full blaze of Scripture-testimony, that, under the former dispensation of the covenant, children were comprehended with their parents; and that their right was recognized in circumcision. This,

I believe, has been ascertained to your satisfaction. Now remember, the promise is still the same: the covenant, given to Abraham, is perpetuated and unalterable. It was not disannulled by the giving of the Law at Sinai: but remained the ground and rule of justification, through every period of the Jewish Church. And it is, likewise, the Gospel of the New Testament. "The blessing of Abraham is come upon us Gentiles. And we receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Dr. Owen (that Master in Israel, "who being "dead yet speaketh,") observes, "that believers under the New Testament have lost nothing: they have been deprived of no privilege that was enjoyed by them under the Old. Many things they have gained, and those of unspeakable excellency, but they have lost nothing at all. Whatever they had of privilege in any ordinance, that is continued; and whatever was of *burden* or *bondage*, that is taken away: all that they had of old was on this account, that they were the *people of God*. To this great *privilege* of being God's peculiar people, believers under the Gospel have now succeeded. This I suppose is unquestionable, that God, making them to be *his people* who were *not a people*, would not cut them short of any privilege which belonged before to his people as such. Let men but give one instance to this purpose, and not beg the matter in question, and it shall suffice. And is it possible that any man should be a loser by the *coming of Christ*, or by his *own coming*



unto Christ? It is against the whole tenor of the Gospel once to imagine it, in the least instance. Let it now be inquired, whether it were not a great *privilege* of the *people of God* of old, that their infant seed were taken into covenant with them, and were made partakers of the initial seal thereof: doubtless it was the greatest they enjoyed, next to the grace they received for the saving of their own souls. Without this, whatever they were, they were not *a people*. Believers under the Gospel are, as we have spoken, the *people of God*; and that with all sorts of advantages annexed unto that state, above what were enjoyed by them who of old were so. How is it then that this *people of God*, made so by Jesus Christ in the Gospel, should have their charter renewed with the loss of one of their choicest rights and privileges? Assuredly it is not so. And therefore, if believers are now, as the Apostle says they are, the people of God, their children have a right to the initial seal of the covenant\*.”

I have now given you the sentiments of one whom I deem the greatest divine that has ever appeared since the days of the Apostles. Observe the words of the apostolic commission, and you will be of opinion with that great and good man, that the Apostles were sent to publish the very same Gospel which God before preached to Abraham.

They were to publish the good tidings of sal-

\* Dr. Owen on the Hebrews, Vol. II. p. 256.



vation *unto all nations*. And this is the proper and distinguishing mark of the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day, in that promise; "In thy seed shall *all the families of the earth* be blessed." Hence, the ascending Saviour gives it in charge to his Apostles and ministers, "Go ye into *all the world*, and "preach the Gospel *to every creature*." "Go ye, "therefore, and teach *all nations*, baptizing "them in the name of the Father, and of the "Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Gentiles, as well as Jews, must hear, as from his own lips, that "thus it is written,"—"that repentance "and remission of sins should be preached, in "his name, *among all nations*, beginning at "Jerusalem." This, evidently and assuredly, is a commission to proclaim the promise given to Abraham—to unfold the blessings contained in it, in a far more delightful manner than ever. It was the merciful pleasure of the great Head of the church *to change the confirming seal*: but without the most distant hint of any change relating to the *application of the seal*. Not a Gentile should have to regret that the blessing, which, like a rich entail, had descended, through a long succession of generations, on the families of Israel, had not been extended to theirs. No: but, "in *his name, all the families of the earth* "shall be blessed." The Apostles, being commanded to *preach* according to the covenant given to Abraham, needed no further direction relating to the parties to be initiated into that covenant. They would proceed according to

the long-established rule and order in the church. They could do no other than consider infants as included with their parents.

*2d Son.* How many scruples, and how much controversy and contention might have been prevented by one express command!

*Father.* My dear, had it been the will of our Lord, at the commencement of this new dispensation of the covenant, to make this very serious variation respecting the parties in it—had he determined on a change, so important in itself, and so repugnant to the feelings of his people, there must, of necessity, have been a very explicit command. The Apostles must have been furnished with it for their own satisfaction. For, how could they have proceeded to the exclusion of infants, without an express warrant? Jewish converts would scarcely have been even pacified with it. For how could they have suffered the exclusion of their offspring without remonstrance and complaint? I will add further, had there been any opposition then, as there has been since, to the covenant right of infants—had there been an individual to offer a scruple concerning it, there is scarcely a doubt but a command would have been given; or, as respecting circumcision (Acts xv), “the Apostles and Elders would have come together to consider of this matter.” But, it seems, no such scruple existed. The *Apostles* found no ground of hesitation. *Jewish and Gentile converts* had no occasion of complaint. Nor were the *enemies* of Christianity furnished with an

objection that must greatly have strengthened their opposition. The long-established and divinely-sanctioned practice in the church was a sufficient directory.

There is a further consideration which, I think, has some weight in demonstrating the inexpediency of an express warrant. The rite of baptism was no novelty. It had long been practised. The Jews themselves, under ceremonial uncleanness<sup>es</sup>, were required to be first washed, or baptized, before they ate of the holy things, or even entered the tabernacle or temple. And it seems, as already stated, that proselytes from the heathen, before their admission into the sanctuary, were not only circumcised, but, with their households, baptized. Hence, baptism found an easy introduction into the Christian Church. And the admission of children, with their parents, followed of course.

*Son.* A thought has struck me respecting *the first institution of Christian baptism*. Are we to consider it as found in the apostolic commission? Had not our Lord instituted baptism before this? Did not his disciples baptize in his name?

*Father.* No doubt our Lord had instituted this ordinance from the commencement of his public ministry. Hence, when “there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews” (or, a certain Jew, who, probably, had been baptized in the name of Jesus) “about purifying, they came to John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond

“ Jordan, to whom thou barest record, behold  
 “ the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.”  
 John iii. 25, 26. “ Nevertheless Jesus baptised  
 “ not, but his disciples.” We regard the Apo-  
 stles’ commission as their warrant for carrying  
 the Gospel *to Gentile nations*, and for applying  
 baptism, the seal of the covenant, *as before in-*  
*stituted and practised*, wherever that Gospel  
 should be received. They, therefore, expect  
 too much, who look to the words of the com-  
 mission for a full explanation of the will of the  
 great Head of the Church relating to baptism.  
 That, assuredly, had been given before; and  
 accorded with *the long-established rule and*  
*practice in the church of God*. Or, beyond a  
 doubt, there would have been found explicit  
 instructions, to the contrary, on record.

*Son.* To me, brother, there appears real  
 weight in these considerations. I cannot  
 conceive it possible that either Apostles or  
 believing parents, who had been conversant  
 with the privileges of the Jewish Church, and  
 the gracious aspect which the covenant, in its  
 former dispensation, bore towards the families  
 of God’s Israel, could easily admit the exclusion  
 of infants, and much less without an express  
 warrant.

*Father.* No argument for the exclusion of in-  
 fants can arise from there not being any mention  
 of them in the words of the Apostles’ commis-  
 sion. The Apostles had received their instruc-  
 tions, as far as needed, long before. Yet no

notice is recorded of any restriction or variation in this matter. A variation of such consequence, without a record, is not to be supposed. And if no prohibition were given—if our Lord left the case of infants untouched, the common usage of ages must have determined the procedure of the Apostles; they would apply the initiating seal now, as before; baptism, under the New Testament, would possess the place which circumcision held under the Old Testament. Bear continually in mind who the persons were to whom the commission was given. They were Jews; men who had been educated in the knowledge of that covenant which God had made to Abraham and their fathers, and who knew it still to be in force. Men who had seen that, in all covenant transactions betwixt God and his church, the infants of believers had always been admitted, together with their parents, and passed under the same initiating rite. Would they then understand their commission in a sense to which they had never been accustomed? A sense they never heard of; nay, that NEVER HAD BEEN HEARD OF SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN.

You have enough to think of till we meet again. Let these things be well considered; and let nothing govern your determinations but sound reason, and the testimony of the Spirit in the word. The Lord bless you and keep you!

## CONVERSATION IV.

*Father.*

MY dear children, you will recollect that, in our last conversation, many considerations were urged to shew the inexpediency of explicit instructions in the Apostles' commission respecting the baptizing of infants. Among other things, we remarked that, as the primary institution of Christian baptism is not found in the New Testament, we have no reason to wonder that the subsequent instructions of our Lord to the Apostles on the subject should be very general.

*3d Son.* I have felt the force of these considerations. Yet, excuse my saying, I wish every shadow of objection removed, and evidence to amount to demonstration. I wish the ground, on which I rest a conclusion of such moment, to be, in the most direct and obvious manner, "the testimony of Jesus." Reasoning from analogy and consequence, in some cases, may be admitted: here I am desirous of a full declaration of my Saviour's will.

*Father.* I wish you to believe and act on conviction. And to admit nothing into your creed, or your practice, but on clear testimony. Yet



reject no testimony, merely because it is not direct, and after the manner you prefer. It becomes a disciple of Jesus to admit evidence arising from *consequence*. In maintaining the right of infants, in this way, we do but tread in the steps of our great Master, when maintaining a point of yet greater importance. When our Lord would convince the Sadducees of "the resurrection of the dead,"—"both of the just and the unjust,"—he does not regard it necessary to produce an *express declaration*, under the hand of the Divine Spirit, in support of this great truth. He takes another method: he goes about to prove it by consequence, and thinks that sufficient. With this view, he leads them to "the burning bush," and proclaims afresh that solemn word, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob!" To them, this great word had, till that moment, remained "a fountain sealed." Our Lord, in a train of consequences, lays open its treasures. In this word, God had made over to the Patriarchs an immense fund of treasure, beyond whatever, in this life, they had received; the wonderful relation was still avowed, the grace proclaimed *long after their death*—proclaimed by "the Lord God of truth." His honour, therefore, required that these eminent men should rise from the dead; to the end that their whole persons may be exalted to such forms of glory that the eternal God may "not be ashamed to be called their God!" And if



Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rise again from the dead to eternal glory, then other good men also, as truly related to God as they. And if the righteous, then the wicked likewise. And so the fundamental doctrine of the resurrection is grounded, and stands firm *on consequences*. We need not so long a train of deductions to prove our infants' right to baptism. But why must we not reason in its support, after the manner of our Lord in the other case? Indeed, we are not alone herein. Our Baptist brethren must do the same. While we pretend not that it is written in so many words—"infants of believers" "are to be baptized,"—and therefore go about, by just consequence and analogy, to prove that such is the will of Christ; they are obliged to confess that they have no prohibition to the contrary, and have no other method of justifying their omission but by consequence: do not they themselves infer the right of female communion? They say, and it is indeed one of their most *plausible arguments*, "We cannot administer baptism to infants, because there is not an express command, or a single instance recorded in Scripture of their having been admitted to that ordinance;" yet they admit females to the Lord's Supper without either *precept or example*. Thus they do that in the one sacrament, which they condemn us for doing in the other. If they require precept and example in the one case, why are they so bold as to act without it in the other, and that too in defiance of their

own principles. What reply can they make to the charge of *inconsistency*? If they say that females eat of the Paschal Lamb; or that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, is not their right to communion *inferred*? Do they not desert their own standard, and assume to themselves that right of inference, which they will not allow to us? Should your sentiments be ever assailed, you may by this one argument *silence and confound* your opponent. It was this that constrained Mr. Edwards to renounce his antipædobaptist principles. And though he published his candid reasons for so doing, yet he met with very uncandid treatment. Of the many unjust aspersions which were cast upon his character, I would say, "O, tell it not in Gath! publish it not in the streets of Askelon! lest the Philistines rejoice; lest the uncircumcised in heart triumph." Whether the late Mr. English, of Wooburn, published his little work on the harmony of the Old and New Testaments before he renounced his antipædobaptist principles, I cannot say; but certainly he discovered that there could be no harmony with them; for they entirely destroyed that connection which he so much admired, and with which he was so much impressed. I could mention others, who on mature reflection were induced to renounce those principles which in the heat and fervour of their first religious impressions they had been

*persuaded* to embrace: but I decline making any further digressions.

*3d Son.* I trust we all listen to your observations with such profound respect as well as attention, as never to consider any remark of yours a digression. If, however, you think you have digressed, I can easily recall your attention to the subject, by inquiring whether these inferences are not drawn from the New Testament, or chiefly from the Old?

*Father.* Why complain or question the force of arguments gathered from the Old Testament? To these our Lord referred the Jews, when he said, "Search the Scriptures; these are they which testify of me." And, "beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto his disciples" in all *those* Scriptures, "the things concerning himself." Let us not depreciate evidence from any part of inspired Scripture. The Old and New Testament relate to the same covenant under different dispensations. There is a beautiful harmony and a necessary connection between them. The latter rises out of the former; unfolds its mysteries, extends its grants, without abrogating one of them. Therefore, if the covenant right of infants had been "confirmed of God in Christ," many ages before the Christian establishment, the question is not, "Did our Lord give a new *commandment* for their admission?" but, "*Did our Lord, by any*

"act or decree, determine their exclusion?  
 "Did the benevolent Author of the Christian  
 "Religion come to diminish its privileges, to  
 "revoke the original grant; to abolish the  
 "Covenant of Grace; or to make void the  
 "promises of the ancient Church?—Jesus Christ  
 "was a minister of the circumcision for the  
 "truth of God to confirm the promises made  
 "unto the Fathers:"—not to abridge, but to  
 enlarge; "not to weaken, but to establish;  
 "not to destroy, but to fulfil; not to plunder,  
 "but to enrich; not to degrade, but to exalt  
 "and magnify the dispensation; not to exclude,  
 "but to invite the children of his servants."  
 Supposing the New Testament to be entirely  
 silent, even this silence would be an invincible  
 argument in their favour. Assuredly, we stand  
 on firm ground while a negative command is  
 wanting.

*Daughter.* And that will never be found. A  
 bill of exclusion passed in the court of the King  
 of saints, and the infant offspring of his professing  
 people the parties excluded!—excluded after their  
 covenant interest had been "confirmed of God  
 "in Christ," and acknowledged and recognized  
 through a long series of generations!—And why  
 excluded? Not, because the grace of the co-  
 venant under the Gospel is circumscribed and  
 flows in a more limited channel! Not because  
 their interest, so long enjoyed, was merely  
 nominal, and afforded no real advantage! Not  
 because "the blessing of Abraham," being

now come on us Gentiles, infants have less need, or are less capable of improving that interest!

*3d Daughter.* Thank you, sister: you have spoken the sentiment of my heart. I was ready to ask, Who, of the little band of our Lord's disciples, could have moved to bring in the bill which my sister's fertile imagination has supposed? Who of them would have stood forward in a business so unlike the spirit of his Master? Yet, could we suppose that an *individual* should thus "offend against the generation of God's children," or, were it possible that, a *synod of Apostles*, "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," should even pass a bill to this effect,—yet, where could the man be found, of assurance enough, to present it to the King of grace, for the royal assent? I believe, indeed, *he* would have driven him from his presence with a frown, and, instead of his signet, have consigned the bill to the flames! "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." Psalm cii. 28.

*Son.* You will remember there was not wanting, among the disciples, a disposition too much like this. In the days of our Lord's ministry, there were parents who, it seems, with pious affection, brought their dear infants to him, craving the blessing of his grace. And the disciples, regarding their suit as a troublesome intrusion, rebuked them.

*2d Daughter.* Mistaken men! I recollect, however, "the Holy Ghost was not yet given" Or how could they have suffered themselves to discourage these tender suppliants? Would they not, rather, have helped them forward, and employed their interest for them? Alas! they "knew not what manner of spirit *they* were of." However, if *they* wanted tenderness, *their Master* appeared "full of grace and truth!" How his resentment kindled at their hasty rebuke! Often have I contemplated, with delight, the Shepherd of Israel gathering these lambs with his arm, and tenderly laying them in his bosom! I can readily turn to the well-known passage. It is a charming record: I feel new affection whenever I think of it. I believe, Sir, it will give us all pleasure to have it read. (Mark x. 13—16.) "And they brought young children "to him, that he should touch them. And his "disciples rebuked them that brought them. "But, when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little "children to come unto me, and forbid them "not: for of such is the kingdom of God. "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not "receive the kingdom of God as a little child, "he shall not enter therein. And he took them "up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and "blessed them."

*3d Daughter.* Happy children! so tenderly embraced! so richly blessed of Jesus! I cannot



regard their favoured lot, without a wish that their privilege were mine. They are blessed indeed whom the Lord blesseth!

*Father.* Let it be remarked, that the passage of Scripture which your sister has just read, besides exemplifying the love of Christ, is also one that strongly concludes for the baptism of infants. “Of such is the kingdom of God.” The kingdom of God in the Gospel denotes either the church militant here on earth, or the church triumphant in heaven. “Now in which-  
 “soever of these senses the argument is taken,  
 “it will be found very conclusive. For if by  
 “*the kingdom of God* be meant the church on  
 “earth, or the kingdom of grace, which Christ  
 “came more clearly and fully to establish, our  
 “Lord, by saying, Of such is the kingdom, de-  
 “clares plainly that infants are to be considered  
 “as having a place in this kingdom, being  
 “members of that body, society, or church,  
 “which he, as Messiah, came to rule and to  
 “save. And if they are to be considered as a  
 “part of this kingdom or visible church, they  
 “are then to be baptized or born again of  
 “water, for this is the only appointed rite of  
 “entering into it. Or, if by the kingdom of  
 “God we understand the church triumphant in  
 “heaven; into that infants cannot enter except  
 “they are born again of the Spirit. Now if  
 “they are capable and proper subjects of a re-  
 “generation by the Spirit, they must be also of  
 “baptism; for the baptismal water is nothing



“ else but the appointed sign or emblem of this  
 “ regenerating Spirit.” The sentiments of the  
 Baptists are, however, directly contrary to the  
 words of our Lord, who says, “ Except a man  
 “ be born of *Water* and of the Spirit, he can-  
 “ not enter the kingdom of God.” For they  
 insist that he must necessarily be born of the  
 Spirit, before he can have any title to baptism;  
 that he must actually receive the thing signified  
 before he can be admitted to the sign, so com-  
 pletely do they invert the order of Christ’s holy  
 institution. We believe that children dying in  
 their infancy are saved—are raised to eternal  
 life by the meritorious obedience of the Second  
 Adam, as they fell under condemnation by the  
 disobedience of the first—seeing then that God,  
 who is rich in mercy, grants them “ the thing  
 “ signified, viz. the renewing of the Holy Ghost,  
 “ it can never be thought his will, that the sign or  
 “ token be denied them. It cannot be here said  
 “ that the words ‘ of such’ are to be under-  
 “ stood, not of infants in years, but of persons  
 “ of a childlike and humble disposition; be-  
 “ cause this would represent our Lord’s con-  
 “ duct as extremely absurd. For why should  
 “ he be angry with his disciples, for forbidding  
 “ infants in years to be brought to him, because  
 “ his kingdom consisted of grown persons of an  
 “ humble disposition! There is no just con-  
 “ nection betwixt his great displeasure at them  
 “ for keeping infants from him, and his giving,

“ as the reason of it, that to quite different sub-  
 “ jects, meek and humble persons, his kingdom  
 “ belonged. According to this fallacious inter-  
 “ pretation, our Lord might rationally have  
 “ done the same, had lambs or doves been going  
 “ to be presented to him, he might have been  
 “ much displeased with those who should have  
 “ forbid them, and have said—*Suffer them to be*  
 “ *brought, for of such, i. e. of persons of a*  
 “ *meek and harmless temper, is the kingdom of*  
 “ *God.*” From this single text of Scripture  
 (notwithstanding the different expositions of it  
 which have been given by those who would  
 fain evade its force), we may learn with plea-  
 sure, and with confidence may rest assured of  
 Christ’s good will towards infants; and very  
 delightful is the thought, that the Lord Jesus  
 has lost none of his tender mercies amidst the  
 glories of his exaltation. Could I describe to  
 you the love of Christ in heaven towards little  
 children here on earth, or represent to you the  
 thousands and ten thousands of babes and suck-  
 lings in heaven who “ have tasted that the  
 “ Lord is gracious,” his name would be very  
 precious to you, and you would not want encou-  
 ragement to direct your hope and your prayer  
 to him. My dear, “ if thou seek him, he will  
 “ be found of thee ! ”

2d Son. I hope the name of Jesus is en-  
 deared to us all. It is our delight to hear of  
 his grace. It is our wish to provoke one

another to love him more. Nay, it is our ambition to have to say, "This is my beloved, and  
"this is my friend!"

*Father.* My dear children, "then, shall all  
"men know that ye are *his* disciples if ye"  
thus "love one another." You have beheld  
with delight this encouraging manifestation of  
Christ's love. And, to my soul, that assurance  
is sweeter than ever—"of such is the kingdom  
"of God." It assures us as I have just ob-  
served that, from age to age, such young disci-  
ples constitute a large proportion of the visible  
church on earth; and that children, dying in  
their infancy, shall form a very considerable  
part of the church triumphant in heaven.

"Babes thither caught from womb and breast  
Claim'd right to praise above the rest:  
For they have found the happy shore  
They never saw, nor sought before."

MR. R. ERSKINE.

*Son.* Strange, that, after such a display of  
the grace of Christ to the children of his pro-  
fessing people, any, in the Christian Church,  
should refuse to admit them by baptism!  
Strange, that Christian ministers and Christian  
parents should acquiesce in their exclusion!

*2d Son.* I hope it will not be deemed any  
interruption to our conversation, if I just read a  
short passage (from that truly pious Christian  
and eminent divine, Mr. Richard Baxter,) which  
now forcibly occurs to my recollection.

*Father.* We shall be happy to hear it ; and I am glad to find, my son, that you read with such attention a writer that will always amply repay your labour.

*2d Son.* Speaking on these words, “ they “ brought young children to Christ,” &c. he thus writes: “ Doth Christ take them in his *arms*, and would he have them *all* put out of his *visible church*? Would he have us receive them *in his name*, and yet not receive them into his church, nor as his disciples? How can infants be received in Christ’s name, if they belong not visibly to him and his church? Nay, doth Christ account it a receiving of himself, and shall I then refuse to receive them, or acknowledge them the subjects of his visible kingdom?—For my part, seeing Christ hath given me so full a discovery of his will in this point, I will boldly adventure to follow his rule, and had rather answer him upon his own encouragement for ADMITTING A HUNDRED INFANTS into his church, than answer for KEEPING OUT ONE. I desire any tender conscientious Christian, that is in doubt, whether infants should be admitted members of the visible church, and would fain know what is the pleasure of Christ in this thing, to bethink himself, whether it be more likely that it will please Christ better to bring, or solemnly admit, infants into the church, or shut them out? And whether *these words* of Christ, so plain and earnest, will not be a better plea at

the judgment day for our admitting infants, than any the Baptists ever brought will be to them for refusing them? I bless the Lord Jesus, the King of the church, for having so great a tenderness to the infants themselves, and so great a care of the information of his church concerning his will, as to speak it thus plainly, that plain meaning men may well see his mind. Even as if he had therefore done this because he foresaw, that in these latter days, some would arise that would renew *the disciples' mistake* in this point\*."

- *Father.* My opinion fully coincides with Mr. Baxter's. Indeed I apprehend, if this procedure of our Lord be not in itself a sufficient warrant for the baptism of infants, yet every candid person must allow, that it furnishes a great deal of very important evidence, more than sufficient to turn the scale in its favour. In putting his hands upon them, he used the visible sign of giving his Spirit unto them: the great blessing held forth in baptism. But the prejudices of education and party zeal often prevail against the force of truth. I am content that others should think and determine for themselves: and "I commend you," my children, "to God and to the word of his grace;" not wishing to interpose any influence of mine between your consciences and that infallible guide. Yet, if I may be justified in expressing

\* Plain Scrip. Proof, p. 103.

to those whom I love as mine own self the feelings of my heart, I have great satisfaction in reflecting, that my dear parents found, in the Gospel Covenant, a ground of believing prayer, on my behalf. And that, on this ground, they devoutly and early acknowledged the claim of God my Redeemer, and, with earnest entreaty, sought his blessing. In many a time of painful trial, have I found my hope revive while pleading (Psal. xxii. 9, 10.) "Thou art he that took me out of the womb. Thou didst make me hope, when I was upon my mother's breast." Psal. cxvi. 16. "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid." As a parent, I have known seasons of piercing anxiety; and I have found a place of sweet repose. Often have I, with a trembling heart, regarded my dear children rising, with a depraved nature, in a defiling and ensnaring world. But in the covenant, which provides for their dearest interest, I have found "an anchor, both sure and stedfast." I have found it to contain a great deal to inspire hope. The recollection of the many seasons wherein your parents have come to the altar of God, bringing their offspring with them, is still very pleasant. *The promise* made the surrender a thank-offering. The vow was recorded. They went their way rejoicing, and their countenances were no more sad. In after-times of anxious care, they have been encouraged to come to God, on behalf of their dear offspring, as to *their*



father and *your* father ; for “ underneath ” were faithful promises, and “ everlasting arms.” By and by “ the hand of the Lord ” appeared. The promise began to blossom and bud. The dews of heavenly influence caused their little plantation to grow. And now, “ bless the Lord, O “ my soul, and all that is within me bless his “ holy name ! ”

*Son.* And “ what shall I render unto the “ Lord for all his benefits to me ! ” Truly, my dear brothers and sisters, such promises and such prayers are no small advantages. “ If the “ Lord had been pleased to destroy us, he “ would not have shewn us such things as “ these ! ” What a mercy to be of “ the families which call on the name of the Lord ! ” to be the offspring of those parents who, amidst their care for their children’s salvation, can find, in the covenant-promise, *a ground of believing supplication !*

*Daughter.* Yes, brother ; and how great a mercy is it, not to be of those many families wherein baptism is regarded as a mere *ceremony* to accompany the giving a *name* to a child, or celebrating his birth with a feast ! where faith and love have no place : and even the fear of God is wanting ! where the grace of the promise is profanely despised, and the baptismal vow impiously neglected !—How just is the observation of good Mr. Henry ! Permit me to read it, and then you will have it correct : “ There would not be so much quarrelling



about infant baptism, if there were but more care to make that practical improvement of it which is required. It is owing to a carnal heart (says he) that the benefit is not obtained, and then the thing itself is disputed. Infant baptism is questioned because it is *not improved*, and then it is not improved *because it is questioned*. If any man set himself seriously to do His will in this matter, by a diligent and conscientious improvement of baptism, “ he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether we speak of “ ourselves.” There are many humble serious Christians, who can experimentally speak of the benefits of it. For my own part, I cannot but take this occasion, to express my gratitude to God for my infant baptism, not only as it was an early admission into the visible body of Christ, but as it furnished my *pious parents* with a good argument (and I trust, through grace, a prevailing argument), for an early dedication of me to God in my childhood. IF GOD HAS WROUGHT ANY GOOD WORK UPON MY SOUL, I desire with humble thankfulness to acknowledge THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF MY INFANT BAPTISM UPON IT.\*”

*Father.* If the baptism of infants be a Divine ordinance, it is an advantage of very high degree! Parents, who “ travel in birth again” for their children, “ until Christ be formed in”

\* Henry’s Treatise on Infant Baptism.

them, will feel great reason to apply themselves to it with the most fervent and diligent prayer. It is too sacred an institution to be engaged in with a trifling spirit; to be accompanied with convivial entertainment and carnal mirth. *They* know not what they do, who, in so solemn an ordinance, approach the altar of God with unhallowed fire!

*3d Daughter.* Who can help lamenting that parents, loving and professing parents, should ever engage in this solemn service without a right understanding of the nature and design of it, without a believing admiring apprehension of the grace so delightfully manifested in it! Alas! that any should ever prove false to God's covenant; and, in their after-carriage, proclaim their contempt of the blessing it seals, and their fixed aversion to the obligations it confirms. What awful prevaricating with God!

*Father.* You remember, God speaks of such conduct, as if all nature must regard it with amazement and horror, Jer. ii. 12, 13: "Be  
"astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be hor-  
"ribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the  
"Lord. For my people have committed two  
"evils: they have forsaken me the Fountain of  
"living waters, and hewed them out cisterns,  
"broken cisterns that can hold no water!"  
"Behold," my children, "the goodness and  
"severity of God!" They are both represented, in very strong characters, in the claim he asserts, and the charge he exhibits against

his ancient people, in reference to their offspring. He is pleased, most graciously, to call them *his own*; therefore their parents ought, very thankfully, to have regarded them as sacred to him. Exek. xvi. 20, 21: "Moreover "thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, "whom thou hast borne *unto me*, and these "hast thou sacrificed unto them," to idols, "to "be devoured: is this of thy whoredoms a "small matter; that thou hast slain *my children*, and delivered them to cause them to "pass through the fire for them?" I fear a charge, not unlike to this, will, at last, be found to lie against many professors, who, after dedicating their children to God, have, in effect, presented them as victims to "the god of this "world."

*2d Daughter.* Indeed, I see more and more the importance of *parental duty*; and the surpassing excellence and happy influence of *paternal piety*. I feel, more than ever, the obligations and encouragements which the great promise of God, and my parents' sacred and affectionate engagements have laid me under. Nor can I help dropping a tear over families, who "have the form, but deny the power" of godliness! I cannot but think *their* disadvantage too, very great, who, though themselves pious, yet do not, cannot, take hold of God's covenant on behalf of their children.

*Father.* Truly, my dear, if the understanding and the heart of God's professing people

apprehended his covenant; and if, with faith and love, they brought their offspring with them, I should hope for happier times. I have sometimes thought, with the truly venerable Mr. R. Baxter, that, in this case, “the public ministry of the word would not be the usual mean of conversion”—that the prayers and endeavours of parents would often be “mighty, “through God,” in effecting the very early surrender of the heart to its rightful Sovereign—that the hosannas of little children would proclaim the King of Glory near; and “out of “the mouths of babes and sucklings” he would “perfect praise.” Then, God’s people would be manifestly separate from the world; the celestial pillar would be seen on their dwellings; God would come unto them, and make his abode with them; “the good-will of him “who dwelt in the bush” would mingle with their bread and their water, with their cares and their griefs; the beauty of holiness would be the adorning of their offspring, and “all “that see them” would “acknowledge them that “they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.” Indeed, if my heart does not deceive me, when a believing parent has, with a true heart, presented his child unto God, on the ground of his precious promise, he will receive him again at his hand, with more than natural affection; he will rejoice over him with that joy which arises out of covenant love; the covenant promise will inspire a lively hope; and will give

no little energy to his prayers and endeavours for the temporal and eternal interest of his child. I think I have found occasion of very pleasant remark, in the record that relates to the infant herald of our Lord, John the Baptist. The venerable Zacharias, receiving, by a special messenger from Heaven, the assurance of the birth of a son in his old age, “ staggered at the “ promise through unbelief.” For this, Gabriel gave sentence, that he should “ be dumb, and “ not able to speak, until the day that these “ things should be performed.” And when was the happy period to his affliction? Not immediately on the birth of the child ; but the day wherein, by “ the seal of the righteousness of “ faith,” God’s right in him was acknowledged. His parents must not regard him as given to them, till, by the appointed sign, they have given him up to God. Then he is especially endeared to them, and they behold him as a sacred trust, from God’s family to be trained up for *him*.

*Son.* My heart-felt grief is, that I have so little considered these great things. Alas, that I should have lived so long, without yielding myself to God, and taking his vows upon me ! without pleading a promise so full of grace, and so early given ! “ From this time ” would I “ cry, “ My Father, thou art the guide of my youth ! ” When I hear of his wondrous mercy to me, and think of the engagement my dear parents subscribed on my behalf, I feel myself drawn with cords of love ; I think I can leave all and

follow Jesus. My thankful spirit cries, "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation!" he shall possess and rule my heart; my father's God, and I will exalt him!"

*2d Son.* Brother, it would be the joy of my heart to present myself a living sacrifice unto the Lord. How gladly would I "come to the altar of God, unto God mine exceeding joy!" But, alas, my sinful heart! I know not how to ask his acceptance of such an offering. When I have attempted to seek his face, and plead his promise, he has seemed to mark mine iniquities, and to shut out my prayer. "I was ashamed, yea even confounded." I could not answer a word.

*Father.* Nor can I wonder that you had nothing to say in your own justification. But "with the Lord there is mercy;" mercy beyond all you can conceive. When he "heard Ephraim bemoaning himself," and condemning himself, how graciously he overlooked his provocations, and remembered his own covenant! What tender mercies that language expresses! "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." If he seem to turn away with a frown, and to expostulate, "How shall I put thee among the children?" It is that you may "know and consider, that it is an evil and bitter thing, that you have forgot-



“ten the Lord your God!” Yet he has the heart of a father still. He is still mindful of his covenant: but he will have you humbled, and abased, and grieved that you have so long lived unmindful of it. And when he shall hear your continued cries for the grace of it; when he shall see you return, prodigal like, and hear the too-long-neglected plea, “My Father!” His house, his arms, his heart, will open to welcome your return.

*Son.* Glorious grace! how this invites the prodigal home! Welcome, welcome assurance, “God is love!” “Where sin abounded, there “grace doth much more abound.”

Well, brother—you have, I hope, heard enough to remove all your scruples.

*3d Son.* Indeed, brother, the more I hear, the better I am satisfied. I am glad my objections were stated; or I should not have had the satisfaction I now feel.

*Father.* When I signified, that the right of infants might be sufficiently proved by consequence and analogy, or by the long-established practice in the Jewish Church, I did not intend to signify that there is nothing *in the New Testament* to support the claim. We have every reason to believe that the Apostles, who were commissioned to preach the Abrahamic Covenant, proceeded to admit converts into the church, after the form and order of that covenant, viz. believing parents with their infant seed. Remarkable are the words of Peter, in his first address



to the Jews, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, Acts ii. 38: "Repent, and be baptized every  
 " one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for  
 " the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the  
 " gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to  
 " *you, and to your children*, and to all that are  
 " afar off," the Gentiles, " even as many as the  
 " Lord your God shall call." This is the ex-  
 press character of the covenant given to Abra-  
 ham: the Gospel-dispensation of which was to  
 be introduced by the extraordinary gifts of the  
 Holy Spirit. But the great blessing of it is de-  
 liverance or salvation. So it is expressed in the  
 prophecy, to which also St. Peter refers, Joel ii.  
 32. " And it shall come to pass that whosoever  
 " shall call on the name of the Lord shall be de-  
 " livered. For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem  
 " shall be *deliverance*, as the Lord hath said, and  
 " in the remnant whom the Lord shall call."  
 This covenant, in this new and enlarged edition  
 of it, in its respect to evangelized *Jews*, was to  
*them and their children*, in the same sense, as  
 under the former and limited edition of it. And  
 it proclaims mercy, equally smiling on relative  
 connections, to proselyted *Gentiles*. They who  
 are *afar off* shall hear the melodious sounds of  
 the Gospel trumpet. And when they come,  
 " ready to perish," they are encouraged to  
 bring " their offspring with them." When, there-  
 fore, it is said, " Then they that *gladly received*  
 " *the word were baptized*," it is to distinguish them  
 from *unbelievers*, not from their offspring. The

promise comprehends believing parents and their children. Therefore both were entitled to baptism. In his next discourse Peter is very explicit in declaring to the Jews, that the ground of his preaching Christ, and, consequently, the rule of his baptizing, was the covenant given to their fathers. Acts iii. 25. "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." That covenant, in the dispensation under which they were born, they well knew, comprehended infants. And would they expect, or, without convincing testimony, could they admit, that, under a dispensation of more abundant grace, they were to be excluded?

*3d Son.* Yet is there not an express limitation, at the close of St. Peter's address, in those words, "even to as many as *the Lord your God shall call?*" Does not this imply that, the promise is to them only who, by an effectual call, are made willing to receive it?

*Father.* You forget the representation before given of the promise as published in the Gospel. It is a free, indefinite, and gracious overture of the blessings of salvation, *in order to repentance and faith.* It is the call to the great supper, "Come, for all things are ready!" The word here used, προσκαλεσμαι, properly signifies to "call to," without any regard to the effect of that call; a gracious overture, whether accepted or not. In this view, "many are called, but

“few chosen.” Wherever God, in his providence, is pleased to open a door before the messengers of his grace, there is this call; there it may be said, “the promise is *to you.*” And wherever there is a people who “embrace the “promise,” they are assured that the God of salvation has a gracious respect to their infant seed in the same overture.

*Father.* Meditate on these things, and may the “Spirit be poured out upon you from on “high!”

## CONVERSATION V.

*Father.*

MY dear children, you have all felt interested in the question relating to the covenant-right of infants. You all have seemed to engage and proceed in it with a serious determination to be governed by the testimony of Scripture. Our labour, hitherto, has not been in vain. On our last opportunity of considering the subject, it appeared, that the families of God's professing people, under the Gospel, could not have been denied the initiating sign without suffering a serious abridgment of privilege; that the omission of *households*, in the words of the Apostles' commission to preach and baptize, furnishes no just reason for their exclusion; that we are fully justified in forming our conclusions on this subject from the Old Testament, and by analogy; that, until a negative can be gathered from the New Testament, the right of infants is established; that, instead of a *negative*, our Lord's most gracious treatment of infants goes very far in determining the *contrary*; and that the right of infants, confirmed by the authority of Scripture, deserves to be held in the highest esteem.

*Son.* Hitherto I have found great satisfaction

in the inquiry. The testimony gathered from the former dispensation of the covenant, and the practice of the Old-Testament Church ; from the gracious regards of our Lord to infants ; and even from his commission to his Apostles, has appeared weighty and strong. I return encouraged to pursue.

*3d Son.* I hope I would not resist what appears so much like the testimony of the Spirit in the word. I think a *Jew* must have understood the Apostle in this sense. Yet may I be excused in asking, Is there nothing in *apostolic practice* to establish this interpretation of the passage ? No instance recorded of infants baptized with their parents ?

*Father.* You will remember, that the covenant-right of infants, which originally was established by Divine authority, had been, for many ages, enjoyed in the Jewish Church ; and even extended to proselytes from the heathen. This were warrant sufficient for baptizing infants, though the New Testament had furnished no record of the practice. But, as we follow the Apostles in the exercise of their ministry, we find repeated notices of their *baptizing households, or families*. The Apostle Paul baptized " Lydia and *her household*." Acts xvi. 15. The same Apostle baptized the *jailor* at Philippi, " and *all his*." Acts xvi. 33. And by him, likewise, " the household of Stephanas " were baptized.

*3d Son.* Yet have we any certain ground to

conclude that there were young children in those households?

*Father.* Though we have nothing in the record to determine this, yet it is not very probable that these three families were without children. But let it be remembered these forms of expression are used by those who were *Jews*, and all their days conversant with the rite of circumcision as applied to *households*, i. e. to parents and children. So that, if there were children in those households, the narrative states that they were baptized.

*Son.* I recollect the Apostle makes an honourable mention of the house of Stephanas, saying, "it is the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." 1 Cor. xvi. 15. And it is particularly said of the jailor, that he "rejoiced, believing in God, with *all his house*."

*Father.* The house of Stephanas might be famed for piety, yet young children be members of it; and have an interest in its advantages.—In the jailor's house, probably, there were others who believed beside himself; yet the form of expression, in the original text, does not denote this. (The participle, *πεπιστευκως*, is singular.) It is, "*he believing*," (or having believed,) "in God, rejoiced with" (or over, or through) "*all his house*." It is, however, fully expressed, that "he was baptized, and *all his straightway*."

*2d Son.* I perceive, you do not rest solely

on the testimony arising out of these records. But as they stand connected with the long continued practice of the Jewish Church, including that which relates to *proselytes* from the heathen. And, in this connection, I think, they fully justify us in concluding, that, if there were children in those families, they were baptized.

*Father.* Yet we are charged with will-worship in baptizing without precept or precedent. But, how far the charge applies, you will be competent to judge for yourselves. On the other hand, we call, and call in vain, on our accusers to justify, in either way, their own procedure. The Acts of the Apostles and their writings comprehend a period of, at least, thirty years from the ascension of our Lord: yet it furnishes not a single instance of a child born of Christian believers, and baptized when adult. Can we fairly suppose that this would have been the case if infant baptism had not been the Apostles' practice? Yet our brethren the *Baptists* still go beyond precept and precedent, presuming to baptize such as, in their infancy, were baptized "in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Indeed, it is greatly to be feared that in so doing they do, as it were, curse what God hath not cursed, and defy what the Lord hath not defied.

*3d Son.* I cannot think they are justified in adopting such a measure, without more substantial reason than has hitherto appeared to me.

*Father.* I wish you likewise to observe, that



the Apostles had suffered a severe rebuke from their Master, for the unkind neglect with which they had manifested a disposition to treat infants. *He* had shewn them, by a visible sign, that they were capable of *the blessing* which baptism was intended to represent:—they had heard *him* declare, “Of such is the kingdom of “heaven!” Let these several circumstances have their due weight; then regard these very men as commissioned, without any express limitation to adults, to initiate the *nations* into this kingdom; and let your own reason say, whether it is probable that they would, or would not apply the initiating sign to children with their parents?

Remember, further, when the Israelites solemnly entered into covenant with God, their children were united with them. See Deut. xxix. 10, 11: “Ye stand this day all of you before the  
 “ Lord your God; your captains of your tribes,  
 “ your elders, and your officers, with all the  
 “ men of Israel, your little ones, your wives,  
 “ and the stranger (the proselyte) that is in thy  
 “ camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the  
 “ drawer of thy water—:” And this, as the following words shew, was the covenant of grace whereby Jehovah should become “a God unto  
 “ them, as he had sworn unto their fathers, to  
 “ Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” It is indeed a lovely representation of the covenant in its aspect towards “the blessed of the Lord, and  
 “ their offspring with them!” Hence, the ap-

plication of *circumcision*, the sign of the covenant; and hence the obligation on parents to *teach their children*. Privilege and duty are, in like manner, united under the Gospel-dispensation of the same covenant. In respect of infants, the King of saints proclaims, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Hence the Apostle Paul, in his Master's name, exhorts parents to "bring up *their children* in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And of children he requires, that they "obey their parents *in the Lord*." These representations and precepts, so perfectly harmonizing with the state of things in the Old-Testament Church, express the judgment of the Apostles relating to the covenant right of infants. And, as there is found no record of any law to the contrary, I apprehend we are justified in concluding that, with these views, they would, in the use of the initiating sign, unite children with their parents. Indeed, had there been though but *one child* in the several households they are said to have baptized, and that child excluded, it would have been a novelty in the church, and the reason, beyond a doubt, would have been *explained and recorded*.

*3d Son.* But what says *church history*? Are there found no records of early writers which will determine the question, whether infant baptism was practised in the church during the ages next following the ministry of the Apostles?

*Father.* The practice is said to have been

unknown till the corruptions of the Roman See began to shew themselves. Indeed, it has been branded as "the pillar and ground of Popery\*." However, I believe you will see reason to conclude the fact is otherwise. No wonder that time should have made havock of early writings : that the productions of the first and second centuries should be reduced to scraps and remnants ; or, if the practice were universal and undisputed, that these fragments should contain scarcely a mention of it. Yet there are found notices sufficient to substantiate the practice. To the authorities, as stated and illustrated in Dr. Williams's *Antipædobaptism Examined*, vol. II., p. 200, &c., I have subjoined a few reflections.

*Justin Martyr*, who wrote about A.D. 150, calls baptism the *spiritual circumcision* ; and speaks of those who, from infants, were *discipled* to Christ,—evidently referring to the Apostles' commission. This supposes the *baptism* of those infants.

*Bardesanes Syrus*, cotemporary with Justin, styles baptism *regeneration*, or a second birth ; and, on account of the infirmity of the first birth, argues the necessity of it in infancy, from that declaration of our Lord, " Except a man be

\* On a violent sermon of Dr. Gill's, entitled, " Infant Baptism the Pillar and Ground of Popery," speaking of his exposition Dr. Adam Clarke justly observes, He was a Baptist, and wrote within sight of his particular creed.

“born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” We are not obliged to subscribe to his doctrine ; but his testimony proves the practice of baptizing infants in his days.

*Irenæus*, Bishop of Lyons, who is said to have been born before the death of the Apostle John, A. D. 97, a disciple of Polycarp, speaks likewise of baptism as *regeneration unto God*, and has this expression—“Christ came to save all persons by himself; all, I say, who are regenerated unto God, infants and little ones, and children, and youths, and elder persons.” This supposes the universal practice of baptizing infants in Christian churches, and the persuasion the writer had of the love of Christ towards them as such.

*Clemens Alexandrinus*, who flourished about ninety years after the Apostles, when cautioning Christians against the use of improper pictures and engravings, recommends the figure of *an Apostle baptizing an infant* for the sculpture of their seals. No doubt, this advice was founded on well-known practice

*Tertullian*, cotemporary with Clement, had a notion that sins committed after baptism were almost, if not utterly, unpardonable ; therefore advises the delay of baptism, until after marriage, or till pains had been taken to teach them concerning Christ. This shews that infant baptism was then uniformly practised.

*Origen*, who was born about the year 183,

within 100 years of the Apostles, says, that “ the baptism of children is given for the remission of sins.” And teaches that, in his time, infants, as well as adults, were admitted into the church by baptism. And, among many things, full to the purpose, says, “ *the church has received the tradition from the Apostles that, baptism ought to be administered to infants.*”

Cyprian \*, who flourished about 150 years after the Apostles, states the decree of a council, consisting of sixty-six bishops, that “ no infant is to be prohibited from the benefit of baptism, though not eight days old, or though but just born.” We know indeed that “ the mystery of iniquity ” soon began to work ; but can we at such an early period suppose the church to have been so very corrupt, so exceeding degenerate, that sixty six bishops should have assembled at Carthage with the venerable Cyprian at their head, to determine the proper time of administering infant baptism, if they knew that infants had never been considered by the Apostles as either proper or capable subjects of it. “ Undoubtedly some of the elders upon this council could remember what the practice of the church had been for seventy or eighty years before, at which period there were probably many living who were born within the age of the Apostles, and who must have known what

\* See the character of Cyprian, in Milner's Church History.

“ their practice had been. If the baptizing of  
 “ infants had not originated with the Apostles,  
 “ is it credible that all the churches of Christen-  
 “ dom should have *so soon* and *so universally*  
 “ departed from the apostolic institution ! If so  
 “ striking and notorious an innovation had been  
 “ attempted, is it not beyond all belief, that it  
 “ should have been every where received with-  
 “ out a single objection from any of those my-  
 “ riads of saints, confessors, and martyrs, who  
 “ lived in the purest and best ages of the  
 “ church !”

*Austin*, maintaining the doctrine of original sin, against *Pelagius*, argues—“ Why are infants  
 “ *baptized* for the remission of sins, if they have  
 “ none ?” And declares, that he “ had never  
 “ heard, even any impious heretic, who should  
 “ assert that infants are not to be baptized.”  
 And again says, that he “ did not remember to  
 “ have ever heard of any heresy or schism  
 “ whatsoever which maintained that baptism  
 “ ought to be denied to infants. This, he adds,  
 “ the church has always possessed, has always  
 “ maintained.” *Austin* died A. D. 430.

How would *Pelagius* have triumphed, could he have proved that infant baptism was an unscriptural, unapostolical, and therefore an unwarrantable innovation. But this, with all his subtilty, was more than he could prove, and, with all his rashness, was more than he would attempt.

*Father*. On these ancient testimonies I would



observe, that if infant baptism be an error, it is one of a very ancient date—so ancient, that no writer, whether sacred or profane, has ever pointed out its author, or so much as dropped a single hint, whereby we might discover the particular age of the church which first gave birth to it. All other heretics of note have been opposed, and their errors confuted, by one or other of the Fathers; but the man who first introduced infant baptism was even more successful than the enemy who sowed his tares in the night. For no one knows when he came, whence he came, or whither he went. Since the name of the person who first introduced infant baptism into the church has never been produced, and the most ancient Fathers speak of it as universally practised in their time, we may safely conclude that the practice is of Divine authority, and of as long standing as Christianity itself.

*Son.* These ancient testimonies have great weight indeed. They must be acknowledged to go very far towards determining the universal practice of infant baptism in the church from the Apostles. It seems the part of candour to admit the fact.

*Father.* It does not concern us to prove, that the children of Christian parents were invariably baptised; or that none are found among the ancient fathers, who, though born of Christian parents, were not baptized till adult, (you have just heard enough of those times to account for such omissions); but the authorities



produced are sufficient to establish the fact, that infant baptism was commonly practised in Christian churches immediately after the times of the Apostles.

*3d Son.* Then, is it possible to account for the discontinuance of infant baptism in after times?

*Father.* In process of time, as the authority of Scripture was less revered, the fancies of men obtained an undue regard. Tertullian, with his opinion and advice, had considerable influence with many. Baptism began to be regarded as "the washing of regeneration;" effectual to cleanse from the guilt and defilement of sin. Nay, and there were those who denied the remission of sins committed *after* baptism. Such opinions as these induced the delay of baptism to a late period; and often till the near approach of death. Some, from a scrupulous regard to the example of Christ, would defer the sacred rite till their thirtieth year. Others would wait the opportunity of having it performed by some eminent bishop. Constantine the Great, long intending, but never finding a fit opportunity of following his Master to the river Jordan, waited until the near approach of death before he would submit to baptism. These opinions, though resisted and condemned by the most eminent of the Fathers, gained ground for a time. The Divine warrant for infant baptism was for a while disputed. But with whom, or at what particular period, the opposition commenc-

ed, or how it subsided, seems to be uncertain. However, after having long lain dormant, it revived in the sixteenth century, and gained ground in Holland, Britain, and elsewhere. At the same time the Quakers appeared contending against the use of water baptism\*.

*2d Son.* These early testimonies have afforded me a great deal of satisfaction, on the important question we are considering.

*Father.* Yet we stand on the ground of Scripture. And so full and abundant is the testimony of inspiration, that we have no need to be solicitous about any additional support.

Follow me, my dear children, in contemplating a figurative statement of the Apostle Paul; and, if I mistake not, you will see the duty and privilege of infant baptism set in a light as clear and satisfactory as if he had written a volume in support of it. I refer to Rom xi. 17, &c. where the Apostle beautifully illustrates the benefit of the Covenant of Grace under its different dispensations. The visible church, in respect of either dispensation, is "the good *olive tree*," partaking of the root and fatness of the Abrahamic or Gospel Covenant; whence is its life, its growth and fruitfulness. In righteous judgment, a large proportion of the natural branches are broken off. And, in rich and sovereign mercy, many branches from "a wild olive tree are grafted in" among those which remain. These "partake of the root and fatness of the good olive tree;" that

\* See Pirie's Dissertation on Baptism, p. 94.

is, they are favoured with the Gospel and all the ordinances of the visible church, which the separated branches are deprived of. They stand *in the place of those*—are admitted to all the privileges, in their full extent, which they lost, through unbelief. But when the Jews enjoyed those privileges, their *offspring* were with them; the covenant right of their infant seed was claimed and admitted, in all their generations. Then, when Gentile converts, by sovereign grace, are grafted in, with the few remaining natural branches, they partake equally with them of the root and fatness of the olive tree—they, *with their offspring*. Observe too, the Apostle relieves the gloom of this Sovereign dispensation, in its reference to the Jews, with a ray of cheerful hope, v. 23: “And they also, if they abide “not in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God “is able to graft them in again;” *they, with their offspring, shall possess the same place in the Gospel Church, which they once held in the Jewish*. Hence the Prophet Isaiah, referring to the happy period of their conversion, teaches, ch. lxxv. ver. 23—“they are the seed of the blessed “of the Lord, and *their offspring* “*with them*.”

*Son.* This strikes conviction beyond resistance!

*3d Son.* A thought just now occurs: and, wishing my mind to be relieved from every scruple, I know, Sir, you will suffer one more intrusion. If the infant seed of believers have an interest in the covenant given to their fathers,

and are to be initiated into the visible church by baptism, why are they not at the same time admitted to the *Lord's Supper*?

*Father.* I am glad you remind me of that objection. The question is not novel. The omission has sometimes been charged on us, as an inconsistency, on our own principles; yet without reason. There is a great and manifest difference in the two sacraments. They require very different qualifications. An infant may be entitled to an estate, but is not qualified to take personal possession or management, or to enjoy the advantages of it. In like manner, when a Jewish infant was circumcised, he was *entitled* to all the privileges of an Israelite; but was he, when only a few weeks old, capable of enjoying them all? It is evident, that an infant of a day is equally capable with an adult in receiving baptism, wherein all are passive, but not so with regard to the Lord's supper, wherein he is required to perform an action commemorative of the love of Christ. In fact, we overlook the nature of privileges if we conclude, because any thing is a privilege to one, it must be so to another; for if there be no answerable qualification, no suitableness in the subject, no capacity of enjoying, it can be under those circumstances no privilege at all. That relative holiness, which, in the children of believers, constitutes their right of admission into the visible church of Christ, furnishes no qualification for the fellowship, the advantages and obligations of a particular society.

That relative holiness which justifies the entrance of *the name* of a child, together with his father's, into the title-deed of an inheritance, gives him no ability *to claim and enjoy* that inheritance. Baptism ratifies, whether to young or old, the annunciation and most gracious overture of covenant blessings. The Lord's supper is an ordinance wherein a people, made willing in the day of the Redeemer's power, declare their acceptance of this grace, and avouch the Lord to be their God. Infants, though capable of a fœderal relation to God, and of having his mercy sweetly to smile upon them, through the medium of a promise, have no meetness to be associated with believers at the Lord's table. They are not prepared to "do this in remembrance of" their dying Lord. They cannot participate in the eucharistic joy and melody of that heavenly banquet. They cannot discern the Lord's body, nor feast upon the Lamb of God. Yet by and by, when they are come to years, we trust, through the influence of covenant grace, having their understandings and their hearts captivated with the glory of this inheritance, and with the love of Christ, the purchaser, they will come to his table, and ratify the deed, which their parents, long before, signed on their behalf; with festive joy and gladness, they will celebrate the grace that so early sought, and with such a treasure so long waited, to enrich them. Yet I cannot contemplate the families of Israel enjoying the delights of that typical feast, without feeling

a wish that my dear children may, while yet young, be prepared for that table where they will publicly declare their faith in Christ, and “eat of his flesh and drink of his blood.”

There is one Scripture more, of great weight in this argument, which I wish you, maturely, to consider. It is recorded, 1 Cor. vii. 13, 14: —“If any brother have a wife that believeth not, and she be willing to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. Else *were your children unclean, but now are they holy.*” In the language of the Old Testament, whatsoever belonged to the sanctuary of God—things dedicated to him, or persons in covenant with him—were termed *holy*. In St. Peter’s vision, heathens, who were strangers to God, and uncircumcised, were represented as *unclean*, Acts xi. 3. And in other passages, the expressions “circumcised and holy,” as likewise, “uncircumcised and unclean,” are of a similar import. The Jews were “the holy seed,” because chosen and separated unto God, and their covenant relation to him confirmed by the seal of circumcision. This ancient term, so well known under the former dispensation, the Apostle copies into the new. And this, evidently, with an intent to solve a diffi-



culty, and satisfy the scruples of some converts to Christianity. Probably, it was not unusual in those days, for a Christian husband or wife to be connected with a partner who had not received "like precious faith," but was still a heathen. It became, therefore, a question of serious importance to many, whether in this case duty did not require the dissolution of the marriage? And a regard to the covenant right of children, would especially, interest the minds of believing parents in this inquiry. Hence it is manifest, that primitive Christians regarded their children as admitted to the same covenant relation to God, as the children of Israelites had enjoyed. In that view, they were *holy*. Herein they could find a ground of plea with God, on behalf of themselves and their offspring, as David, it seems, did, Psal. lxxxii 2: "Preserve my soul, for I am holy"—*i. e.* dedicated to thee, and in covenant with thee.

Christians, in early days, saw herein a privilege of no trifling consideration. Nor could they be easily reconciled to the loss of it. They were satisfied of the covenant right of their children when the parents were *both* Christian. And the Apostle, with a fatherly solicitude, applies himself to remove their scruple where one parent only was a believer. In this address he explicitly determines, that with reference to their issue, the unbelieving, or heathen, parent is sanctified, and, in an outward respect, constituted a Christian, by the believing parent; inso-



much that the covenant right of their children remains unimpaired and sure. Were not this the case, the Apostle adds, they would be "*unclean*," like the children of the heathen. "But now they are holy," and of the kingdom of God. I know not in what stronger terms the Apostle could have declared the covenant-right of infants under the Gospel-dispensation. And in these plain terms he vindicates their claim to baptism in the Christian Church.

*Son.* This, to my feeble apprehension, carries demonstration with it; and appears to be the mind of the Spirit. Yet, perhaps, to obviate the conclusion, some very different and plausible interpretation has been discovered.

*Father.* Indeed, I regard with concern the laboured inventions of our Baptist brethren, to resist the plain import of this Scripture. One writer admits the idea of relative sanctification, but ascribes it to devotion—regards the believing husband or wife as separating or sanctifying his or her partner and children to the fear and service of God by prayer: as Job sanctified his children, "offering burnt-offerings according to the number of them all." You will observe, Job regarded with anxiety those festive occasions to which this measure relates. He knew enough of his children to fear, lest some of them should not be sufficiently guarded against the temptations of such a season. His fatherly care for their safety excited him to this provision. He piously

propitiated on their behalf. The case of these primitive disciples of Christ was entirely different. Existing circumstances had awakened a care about the rights of children, some at least of whom had done neither good nor evil. They state their difficulty—"I," says one, "am  
 " a believer; my partner an unbeliever; have my  
 " children, in respect of God and his covenant,  
 " the privileges of *the children of believers*; or,  
 " are they to be denominated *unclean*? Does my  
 " duty, as a Christian, require me to dissolve the  
 " marriage-relation? or may it, without preju-  
 " dice to my offspring, be still admitted?"

To such scruples as these, the Apostle's words, in the sense we have given them, form a direct and satisfactory reply. Had he meant, by sanctification and holiness, a benefit that must result from relative *piety and prayer*, he would have answered with an *exhortation*—"Pray without ceasing!" But there is not a word like it. This, therefore, cannot be the proper sense of the passage.

More generally, our Baptist brethren consider holiness in this Scripture as meant of *legitimacy*. Then the Apostle resolves the scruple of early and anxious believers thus—"Proceed not to  
 " dissolve your marriage union, though with a  
 " heathen: for you are mutually sanctified, or  
 " set apart, given up to each other—*i. e.* you  
 " are lawfully married. Therefore, your chil-  
 " dren are holy, *i. e.* legitimate."

*Son.* Is this the scriptural meaning of the word the Apostle here uses?

*Father.* Never. The words (*ακαθαρτος*) *unclean*, and (*αγιος*) *holy*, are used in a very great number of places in the New Testament, and in the Septuagint version of the Old, but no where are they found to signify *illegitimate* and *legitimate*. It is hard, therefore, to press them into a service for which they are entirely unequal.

*Son.* According to this interpretation, I cannot find that the Apostle's reply was calculated to relieve the anxiety of the present occasion.

*Father.* He is made to reply in a manner not like himself. He tells these new converts to Christianity just what they knew before. They felt a difficulty relating to their marriage union, especially from a concern about their children. They did not need to be told that, in a civil regard, they were lawfully married, and that their children were legitimate. Theirs was a case of conscience. Probably they knew that, under the Old Testament, the like circumstance would have constrained a divorce. It was then unlawful for an Israelite to marry a heathen. The Apostle evidently enters into their feelings. He tells them that, under the Gospel, that law is abolished. He assures them, that the curse which so long, and so awfully, had hung over Gentile sinners, was done away by the faith of the Gospel. And that, while grace and duty

required, “be not unequally yoked with unbelievers,” “the righteousness of God” in rewarding the obedience of his Son “is unto all, and upon all them that believe,” Jews and Gentiles, “for there is no difference;”—that the Gospel, the covenant received by faith, extends its benign influence, in relative connections, as far as ever; insomuch that the marriage connection is admitted or suffered, and that an unbelieving husband or wife is, in such a sense, sanctified thereby, that the children, resulting from such connections, are *visibly holy*—*i. e.* in an external covenant relation, are *the Lord’s*; and the *sign* of separation from the world belongs to them as before. I cannot but regard this as the mind of the Spirit in this passage.

An ingenious writer illustrates this matter by analogy thus:—“A Briton marries a Jewess, “who cannot inherit by the laws of his country. “He doubts the legality of his marriage, whether his issue by her can inherit. He is told “that, although his wife cannot inherit, either “in her own personal right, or by any right he “can give her, yet, as the British law does not “prohibit his marrying a Jewess, his issue by “her are considered not as Jews, but Britons; “and so can inherit the possession of their father, “according to law. The case,” adds he, “is “exactly in point; and in this case, it is easy “to see that the legitimacy of the child, and

“ that of the mother, is not of the same kind.  
 “ The child is a British subject: she is not.  
 “ The child can inherit: she cannot. It is  
 “ precisely so in the case before us. The child  
 “ is holy, *i. e.* a member of the visible church:  
 “ the heathen mother is not. The child has a  
 “ right to the privileges of the visible church,  
 “ while his mother has no title of that kind \*.”

*3d Son.* I feel constrained to regard this as the obvious meaning of an important Scripture.

*Father.* And in my regard, this is one of those Scriptures which, like well-placed columns, in all their bearings, or as steadfast friends in all revolutions, are unalterable, in their support to the infants' cause.

Each another we have in Rom. iv. 11. Opposition may tamper with these Scriptures, but to no purpose. Neither menace nor bribe has any effect. And they are *able*, as they are *immoveable*. Though too much overlooked, yet, whenever their testimony is properly called for, it bears irresistible conviction with it.

*Son.* It is enough. While such friends are within call, the infants' cause cannot be lost. There will be occasion for light and gladness in the dwellings of the faithful. We bow to the commanding power of the word of God. This acknowledgment, every countenance says, is general. Every heart among us feels, Sir, your

\* See Pirie's Dissertation on Baptism, p. 71.

fatherly goodness in the pains you have taken to obviate our doubts and illustrate the word of truth.

*Father.* I have an ample recompence in seeing my dear children "receive the truth in the love of it." May the great promise ever be the joy and rejoicing of you all ! It is a goodly heritage. Never lose sight of covenant engagements and obligations. And your experience, living and dying, will proclaim, "He is faithful that hath promised !"

We here close the first part of our subject—*the covenant right of infants.*

*The scriptural mode of baptism* requires to be next considered. "Mercy and truth be with you !" Amen.

## CONVERSATION VI.

*Father.*

YOU expect, my dear children, to renew the subject of Christian baptism. You have not learned to regard it as a subject of dry, much less of angry disputation. It has deeply interested your minds. I hope it has awakened sentiments of the purest and most fervent devotion.

*Daughter.* Indeed I cannot reflect on the conversation in which I have been, on several occasions, favoured to bear a part, but with the most cordial delight. Day and night the subject has been present with me. My thoughts have been full of it. My judgment has found rest in what I have hitherto heard. I wish to know more of an ordinance so full of instruction and consolation.

*Son.* Truly, sister, I have been pleased and gratified too. Yet my memory is treacherous. I want to be put in remembrance of the things I have heard; and, in the light of Scripture, take a further view of them. Indeed, Sir, I shall be glad to hear, more particularly than I recollect to have heard, “ what is the *design* of Christian baptism?”



*Father.* Christian baptism is an ordinance instituted by Christ, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth represent and seal, on God's part, the grant, and on our part, (for ourselves, or our children,) the acceptance, of the Covenant of Grace with all its treasures and obligations. In this sign or seal is represented the great blessing of the covenant, "the washing  
" of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy  
" Ghost." The minister of the sanctuary appears in the name of "the great God, even our  
" Saviour Jesus Christ," and publishes an overture and grant of all the grace that proceeds from the purpose of the Father, through the atoning blood of the Son. The humble claimant, "coming  
" to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant," subscribes a declaration, wherein he renounces sin, and Satan, and the world, and humbly and thankfully accepts the rich grace contained in the name, or manifestation, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And to this engagement the messenger, or minister, as in the presence of God, of angels and men, applies the appointed seal.

*2d Son.* Well may a believer in Christ declare his acceptance of such a grant, and join himself to the Lord, "with all his heart, and  
" with all his soul." What mercy has he in such an overture! and in the promise of the Holy Spirit, by whose operation he is "wrought  
" for this self-same thing!"

*Father.* Yea, "happy the man who is in

“such a case!” happy, amidst all changes, in  
 “having the God of Jacob for his help!” happy  
 in having his “life hid with Christ in God,”  
 his refuge and strength, and the unmeasurable  
 source of his consolation!

*3d Daughter.* Blessed, blessed state! It is  
 heaven on earth to be enabled to say, “Being  
 “justified by faith, we have peace with God  
 “through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

*Daughter.* Yes, and all this *confirmed and  
 made sure.* Here is a seal applied, which  
 Heaven itself ordained. It seems to be like  
 what Abraham was honoured with, when, “that  
 “*he* might have,” and, in these last days, that  
*we* might have, “a strong consolation,” God  
 was pleased to “confirm the promise with an  
 “*oath.*”

*2d Daughter.* True, sister; that sentiment  
 appears equally just and delightful. It corre-  
 ponds, if I rightly conceive, with what the Apo-  
 stle says of the Ephesians, (ch. i. 13.) “after  
 “that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy  
 “Spirit of promise.”

*Father.* Very just. Water, used in baptism,  
 is a significant figure of the purifying and re-  
 freshing influences of the Holy Spirit, by which  
 believers in Christ are all “sealed unto the day  
 “of redemption.” This brings us to the great  
 question—a question that has, a great deal too  
 much, agitated and disturbed the Christian  
 world—*In what manner is water to be used in  
 baptism?*

*3d Son.* Strange that any room for disputation should be found in a subject of this nature. If baptism be an institution of Christ, I should have expected that the expression of his will would have been explicit, and have left no room for doubtful disputation.

*Father.* Yet it is a fact, that good men, and men of great information, are very much divided in this matter. Controversy has arisen, and often been conducted with undue animosity. And, which is worse than all, it has been the occasion of schism in the church of Christ; and of the exclusion, in many instances, of the children of God from their Father's table.

*Daughter.* What! angry strife, and determinations unreasonable and injurious among the followers of Jesus! I should from *them* have expected, if not uniformity of sentiment, yet gentleness and liberality. I should fear the Spirit of Christ, and reverence for *his* authority in his church, must have been much wanting. But what can be the occasion of this strife?

*Father.* My dear, on the one hand; our brethren the Baptists have ever been immovably, perhaps unreasonably, fixed in these two points, viz. that our Lord, in the apostolic commission, clearly and fully declared his will and our duty relating to the *subject*, and the *mode* of baptism—and that, when he said, “Go teach all nations, baptizing them”—he, in effect, said, “Go, baptize none but those “who are first taught, and baptize them by

“immersion”—making baptism and immersion synonymous terms; and immersion essential to baptism.

On the other hand, we behold men who, in a very high degree, have been devoted to God—earnest inquirers after truth, and, on account of their learning and piety, likely to discover it—men who have endured “a great fight of affliction” in their zeal to maintain the purity of Divine institutions—men, not a few; but, in ages past, the servants of God almost universally; and in later times, men equally “full of the Holy Ghost and of faith”—these have declared, and do declare their full persuasion, on what they deem scriptural ground, of the right of the infant seed of believers to the seal of the covenant; and their clear conviction, that our Lord has no where determined immersion to be the *proper* and *only* mode of baptism. They are willing that their brethren should enjoy their own sentiments—not opposing the practice of *plunging* where it is preferred; but they consider themselves justified, by the testimony of the Spirit in the word, while they give the preference to the mode of *pouring or sprinkling*.

*2d Son.* It would seem strange indeed that, men so distinguished for piety, and for sufferings endured in resisting the superstition of Popery, and the impositions of arbitrary power, should, notwithstanding, be left to follow a practice contrary to the institution of their

great Master, in a matter of such importance; and that, for so long a time, amidst bright displays of the power and glory of the Lord, almost the whole church should be ignorant of their Master's pleasure. But when we find their practice condemned by any of their fellow-servants, we have no alternative but to make our appeal "to the law, and to the testimony."

*2d Daughter.* What a mercy to have an oracle at hand—an infallible guide to every humble inquirer! There is a promise full of consolation—"And when *he*, the Spirit of truth "is come, he shall lead you into all truth." Spirit of Jesus, come; honour this little circle with thy presence; dissipate every cloud of error and prejudice; open our understandings, that we may know the Scriptures!

*3d Son.* Amen! and Amen! I believe we are all united in this request, unbiassed by any prepossession or prejudice. I trust it will be given us to see the truth relating to our present inquiry, "in the demonstration of the Spirit."

I observed, Sir, when you were representing the different opinions of good men, you signified that some consider our Lord as having clearly and fully declared *his* will and *our* duty relating to baptism, *in the apostolic commission*. Now, I recollect it was, in a former Conversation, stated that the original institution of baptism is not found in that commission. It seems unreasonable, therefore, to look for full and explicit instructions in that oracle.

*Father.* I think so too. And I wish you to retain that circumstance in your memory. The primary institution of baptism having before taken place, our Lord judged it sufficient to make use of very general terms in the commission. It is evident here, as in the institution of the *Sabbath*, and in matters relating to *church discipline*, that, in regard to some particulars, though of a positive nature, the will of Christ is to be deduced from other Scriptures, or to be determined by reasons of prudence or piety. Circumstances manifestly, and of necessity, require this. Our brethren, to me, appear to lay a stress on the words found in the apostolic commission which the case will by no means warrant. Indeed, they rest the argument almost wholly on that ground. I read, with surprize, in Dr. Williams, a quotation from an esteemed author of theirs; who, animadverting on the conduct of a brother of the same persuasion, for occasionally quitting that imaginary strong hold, (viz. that baptism is established by a law merely positive) tells him, “except it be maintained that positive ordinances are to be entirely governed by positive law and primitive example, it is impossible for him to stand his ground by fair argument, in various cases, when disputing with pædobaptists as such.”

*2d Son.* I cannot wonder that he should apprehend a failure of plain scriptural argument against infant baptism. I know that, while, on



that subject we were looking into the Scriptures, there issued such a full blaze of evidence in favour of the infant's claim, that I thought every mind, not obstinately resisting, must yield to its commanding power.

*Daughter.* So indeed I think. Nor can I see, after this concession, any plausible pretext for controversy, in respect either of the subject or the mode. No other fort, he confesses, is tenable. And what is this? A fort in idea. Examine it, and, like a dream when one awaketh, it disappears: and with it all opposition to the cause of infant baptism.

*Father.* My dear, your inference is not without reason. You will think it strange that it is not admitted by every sincere inquirer after truth. It is manifest that our Lord, by his disciples, baptized after the manner of his herald John. John's was Jewish baptism. It had its ground in the rites of the Jewish worship. When our ascending Saviour commissioned his Apostles to preach to the Gentiles, perhaps he explained, more fully than before, the reference of baptism to the sacred persons of "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:" but, respecting the *subject*, or the *mode*, he *ordained nothing new*. He expressed himself in the most general terms, "Go, *disciple* all nations, baptizing them—"

The clause that follows, relating to the instruction they were to give, is equally general, "teaching them" (here the original word is



different from that in the former clause, and is properly rendered *teaching* them) “to observe all things—.” Our Lord appoints no definite *mode* of teaching. Whether, after a princely manner, they should publish an edict in the name of “the King of kings,” declarative of his sovereign will and transcendent mercy; or apply themselves to the understandings and consciences of men, in public or private address. No particular direction was needed in either case: in the one and the other they would proceed as they had already learned of their Divine Master. The Apostles could not be at a loss about their Master’s meaning. They would clearly understand that nothing new was prescribed, excepting only that which related to the *enlargement* of their commission. They were now to baptize *among the Gentiles*, according to the rule, and after the manner they had been taught to observe *among the Jews*.

It is not necessary here to repeat what was before said in considering this Scripture, in reference to the *subjects of baptism*.

*3d Son.* Then I perceive that, in determining the manner in which baptism is properly administered, we must inquire after the true meaning of the word, and be acquainted with the rites of purification instituted and practised under the law. We are, therefore, constrained to ask your assistance, in order, first, to ascertain the *proper signification of the word*.

*Father.* The inquiry is just and important.

You will readily perceive that the investigation will lead to no discovery that can justify the restricting of this sacred rite to any one particular mode. βαπτίζω is the original word which it has pleased the Holy Spirit, in this matter, to make choice of. In the institution of an initiatory rite, had *he* intended that it should denote *plunging only*, or *sprinkling only*, there are other words that might have been preferred. But, for wise reasons, he has, it seems, been pleased to choose a word that, in either respect, is by no means definite. βαπτίζω is a derivative from βαπτω its root; consequently, loses a measure of its energy and force. We will, however, for the present, associate the parent with its offspring, while we speak of their *primary meaning*.

On the general testimony of the best masters of the Greek language, it appears, that their primary signification is, “to tinge, to wet, to anoint; to imbue, as with vinegar or any sauce; to stain, as the ancient Britons their bodies; to dye, to impregnate with different substances, to infect as with poison—and this by whatever means.” You will observe, there is nothing, in the strict and proper signification of the words, that determines the *manner* in which these effects are produced. That is indefinite and accidental. Dr. Williams, in the excellent work before referred to, (viz. Antipædobaptism Exam. vol. ii. p. 141.) has illustrated this remark by many examples from the Greek Classics.

*Aristophanes* uses the same word when representing an old comedian of Athens, "*staining*—daubing" (not with dipping) "his face in tawny colours." *Aristotle* has the same word, when representing a hand, "*tinged* with a florid colour in pressing a juicy substance." *Marcus Antoninus*, by the same word, describes the mind as *imbued*, tintured by the thoughts. *Plutarch*, in a treatise on education, using the word βαπτίζω represents the minds of children, as baptized by the instructions which their teachers instil into them. And he compares this to a gardener's *pouring water on his plants*. Other references from classical writers may be produced in demonstration of this primary use of these words.

*Son.* This, indeed, is a delightful view of the mystery and grace of baptism. And to me it seems that the testimony of St. Paul might have been added to that of the classics. If I mistake not, he expresses the same thing; and I now understand him better than ever. I refer to a passage that lately struck and perplexed me. It is in 1 Cor. xii. 13: "By one spirit, we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit." I now see by the light of these quotations, that the inward grace, wherever applied, produces a most beneficial change; instils new instructions, implants and cherishes new principles, and so tinctures and imbues the

whole man, that "Christ is formed in" him, and he has "the mind of Christ."

*Father.* It is a wonderful, delightful change—a lovely representation of baptism in its spiritual meaning. It is ever thus where that union with Christ is really effected, of which baptism is a sign. Then, virtue cometh out of him, and transfuses itself through the whole man. The effect is common to all who believe. They have all drank into one spirit: and, notwithstanding their several peculiarities and diversity in outward respects, they "are all baptized into one body"—all members one of another; their judgments, affections, and principles of action congenial; and the Spirit of Christ, as a living principle, animates, beautifies, and governs the whole.

The *secondary* use of these words is, to *dip*, to *pour*, to *sprinkle*, to *paint*, or any other accident by which the effect is produced. So, a vesture is tinged with blood, either by dipping, or pouring, sprinkling, daubing, &c. In either way, it is *baptized*.

*Daughter.* Well, Sir, though the works of these learned Grecians are not within the limits of my acquaintance, yet my mind has been very pleasantly entertained, and, I hope, profitably instructed by these quotations. Before I heard my brother's remark, I began to suspect whether I had not been plucking imaginary fruits, and feasting on conceits that have no support in Scripture or reason. However, I thought,

and now am satisfied, that I saw in those figures the *inward grace* pertaining to this sacrament represented in a very striking manner. It seemed as if my soul felt a desire to be thus watered with heavenly doctrine, to be imbued and tinctured with Christian principles, even with the grace and spirit of my great Master; and to be tinged and stained and perfectly dyed, if it were possible, with the crimson of his precious blood.

*2d Daughter.* Ah, my dear sister, *that* is a benefit worth contending for. Indeed, what would water baptism, in any form, avail me, without this *inward grace*, this sacred tinge, this anointing of the Holy Ghost? *That* is to be washed with water. *This* is to be beautified with salvation. “Blessed saints above, you  
“have the baptism I want; you have washed  
“*your* robes, and made them white in the blood  
“of the Lamb. Therefore are you without  
“spot before the throne of God.”

*Son.* This brings to my remembrance the reading of an order of priests anciently in Greece, who were called *baptoi*. Yet I believe it was not because they had been initiated into that order by immersion, or by having water poured or sprinkled on them; but because they were distinguished by a certain colour wherewith their bodies were stained. This serves to confirm what we have heard of the primary meaning of the word, and agrees with what has been said of the spiritual import of baptism—

it is "the beauty of holiness" distinguishing and adorning those who have truly put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Father.* This order of priests is mentioned by Aristophanes. *They are bapttoi or baptists* indeed, who are "washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by "the Spirit of our God."

*2d Son.* I remember what our Lord, in reference to Jewish ordinances, says, Mark ix. 49: "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." *This*, likewise, I suppose, has respect to the *inward grace*. I would wish, however, to present myself, and my every offering unto God, with that humble faith and spiritual affection, which, if I mistake not, constitute the very soul of baptism.

*Father.* Happy, indeed, would it be, for professors, if their solicitude related especially to *the thing signified* in baptism. If they thought more on the words of our Lord, "Unless I "wash thee, thou hast no part in me." Then, I think, there would be but little strife about the quantity of water made use of. The Holy Ghost, by an instructive figure, in which Christian parents may see something of their duty and privilege, requires the offerings presented unto God to be *seasoned with salt*. It was therefore given in charge to the priests, Lev ii. 13, "Thou shalt "not suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God "to be lacking from thy meat-offering: with all "thine offerings" (burnt-offerings as well as meat-



offerings) "thou shalt offer salt." The same blessed Spirit, by the Prophet Ezekiel, (ch. xvi. 4) referring to the condition of Israel, before God gave his covenant to Abraham, and using the similitude of a new-born infant, neglected and ready to perish, introduces this circumstance among others—"thou wast not salted at all." I have nothing to say respecting the literal import of the expression. But I think our Lord authorizes us to regard this word, in Scripture, as containing a spiritual and mystical sense. Israel's progenitors, previous to the call of Abraham, were without "the salt of God's covenant." When a child was born, it was, in reference to its superior nature, as if neglected and exposed. Alas, where was there a promise in which the grace of God encouraged the believing expectations and affectionate endeavours of parents! Traditional records of the great original promise, and of the covenant granted to Noah, probably, in very many families, were entirely lost. The Holy Spirit was rarely found to inspire the parental breast with gracious affections. There was no salt wherewith to season the offering. And without it, it must not appear on the altar of Jehovah. Affecting representation! For ever adored be the grace of God. You, my dear children, did not enter life under these most destitute and deplorable circumstances.

*3d Daughter.* Aggravated, indeed, must be our guilt and our condemnation, if, having been



distinguished with advantages so great, we should “fall from our own steadfastness.”

*Son.* Father of mercies, prevent, though by the severest discipline, so impious and so senseless an abuse of thy great goodness!

It appears from the testimonies produced, that the primary signification of these words βαπτω and βαπτίζω, as used in the ancient Greek classics, is not *to dip*; and that, if plunging, in any expression, be found in the connection, it is to be understood in a secondary sense—it is an accident by which the primary design is effected.

*Father.* Your conclusion is very just; for many great and good men are of this opinion, who diligently studied the classics, with the noble design of having a more deep and correct knowledge of the sacred Scriptures. “No one instance can be given in Scripture (says Dr. Owen), wherein βαπτίζω doth necessarily signify either *to dip or plunge*. It doth not signify *properly to dip or plunge*, for that in Greek is εμβαπτω or εμβαπτίζω.”

Mr. John Wesley, who was a man of literature as well as of the most active piety, speaking of baptism, observes, “The matter of this sacrament is water; which, as it has a natural power of cleansing, is the more fit for this symbolical use. Baptism is performed by *washing, dipping, or sprinkling* the person in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—I say, by *washing, dipping,*

“ *or sprinkling*, because it is *not determined* in  
 “ Scripture in which of these ways it shall be  
 “ done, neither by any express precept, nor by any  
 “ such example as clearly proves it; nor by the  
 “ force and meaning of the word *baptize*. That  
 “ there is no express precept, all *calm*, dispa-  
 “ sionate men allow, neither is there any con-  
 “ clusive example. It cannot be certainly  
 “ proved from Scripture, that John’s baptism  
 “ was performed by dipping. Nor can it be  
 “ proved that the baptism of our Saviour, or  
 “ that administered by his disciples was by im-  
 “ mersion: no, nor that of the Eunuch baptized  
 “ by Philip, though they both ‘went down into  
 “ ‘the water;’ yet no determinate depth of wa-  
 “ ter is implied: it might be up to their knees,  
 “ or it might not be above their ancles. And,  
 “ as nothing can be determined from Scripture  
 “ precept or example, so neither from the force  
 “ or meaning of the word; for the words *bap-*  
 “ *tize* and *baptism* do not necessarily imply dip-  
 “ ping, but are used in other senses in several  
 “ places of Scripture.”—Works, Vol. xix. p. 275.

If at your leisure you will turn to the Berry-  
 Street Sermons, you will find Dr. Watts to be  
 of the same opinion.—It is of no consequence,  
 says the late Mr. John Newton, whether the  
 water in baptism be administered by spoonfuls  
 or tubfuls: it is indeed a ceremonial, and but  
 a ceremonial washing, so that no stress ought to  
 be laid upon it, much less ought the peace and  
*unity* of the Church to be disturbed and broken

by it. "Is there any virtue, is there any "praise" in making that the badge of parties and carnal divisions in the Church, which was graciously intended as a bond of general union?

*3d Son.* I long to know more fully the sense in which these words are used in the holy Scriptures.

*Father.* It is now too late to engage in that subject. If God be pleased to favour us with another meeting, we will make it our first inquiry. May you all "receive with meekness "the engrafted word which is able to save "your souls!"

## CONVERSATION VII.

*Father.*

I FEEL pleasure on the return of these occasions as pleasant seed times. It is delightful to sow in a fruitful soil, and amidst plentiful dews. I feel encouraged, and sow in hope.

*Son.* I trust, God will water the ground that receives this heavenly doctrine; and “make it “bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to “the sower, and bread to the eater!”

*3d Son.* Now, Sir, we shall be thankful to hear, in what sense the words βαπλω and βαπλιζω are used in the *sacred Scriptures*?

*Father.* This, indeed, is a very proper inquiry. A distinction, however, is to be observed between the *general* meaning of the words in the Bible, and the *sacramental* meaning of the latter of them. Let us turn our attention a little to their *general meaning*.

When Nebuchadnezzar, for his pride, was degraded from his princely honours, and even from the dignity of rational life, and classed with senseless brutes, it is said, Dan. iv. 33, “his “body was *wet with the dew*” the falling dew of “heaven.” The word here used according to the Septuagint version, is the root of βαπλιζω, and

usually expresses a stronger sense than its derivative. Nebuchadnezzar's body we regard as wet—completely wet. No matter by what means it was brought into this state. Yet it is ascribed to the falling dew.

Another passage noticed by those who have inquired after the general meaning of the word βαπτίζω is found in Isa. xxi. 4. The allusion is, prophetically, to Babylon, or to Belshazzar, Babylon's monarch, in the night of debauchery and riot. "My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted  
 "me, the night of my pleasure hath he turned  
 "unto me." Instead of "fearfulness affrighted  
 "me," the Septuagint version reads it, "iniquity  
 "baptized me." The expression is strongly figurative. In what sense may it be said, that his iniquity baptized him? It was *the conviction, and conscious reproach of his iniquity*—(according to the primary meaning of the word): it imbued, it stained his countenance: confusion and horror turned it pale; or shame covered it with a crimson dye. Or, it was the *punishment* of his iniquity: God poured his flaming wrath upon him.

On the other hand, there is a passage of Scripture in which our translators have given to βαπτίζω the signification of dipping. The reference is to Naaman the Syrian captain, and to his leprosy, 2 Kings v. 10—14. "Go," says the prophet, "and wash in," or at "Jordan seven times."—"Then, went he down, and *dipped*" washed "himself seven times in," or at "Jordan, according to the saying of the

“man of God.” Thus our translators have rendered the word.

*3d Son.* The prophet, I conclude, may be supposed to have respect to the ordinance which the law appointed for the cleansing of the leper. Perhaps, from the ceremonies used on that occasion, we may be able to determine what is here meant.

*Father.* A very proper thought. The subject, however, is full of instruction, whether it determine this particular inquiry or not.

The leprosy was a contagious disease, that baffled the skill of the physician, and the power of medicine—a sore scourge in the hand of the Lord. Sometimes, it was suddenly inflicted on individuals, for the punishment of great or presumptuous sins; as in the case of Miriam sister of Moses, of Gehazi servant of Elisha, and Uzziah king of Judah. Deplorable was the condition of the leper: he was “as one *dead*, his “flesh half consumed.” The law shut him out from society, but prescribed no means of healing. The priest looked on the patient when healed; and directed and assisted him in returning to give thanks unto the Lord; but it was the Lord who wounded, and he alone could heal. That leper, therefore, confessed the Godhead of Jesus, who said, “Lord if thou wilt, “*thou* canst make me clean!” And in the efficacy of his reply, “I will—be thou clean,” Jesus proved himself the Son of God with power.

The rites appointed for the purifying the

healed leper were very remarkable. See Lev. xiv. Two clean birds must be provided. The blood of one of them must be wrung into an earthen vessel containing living or spring water. The other bird, and a stick of cedar wood, and a bunch of hyssop and scarlet wool bound together, formed the instrument by which the blood and water were sprinkled on the recovered leper. Seven times the priest was to *sprinkle* upon him, and make (*i. e.* pronounce) him clean. The living bird must then be let go in the open field. It remained for the leper to shave himself, and wash his clothes and himself with water; and to repeat those rites after seven days. On the eighth day he must bring his sacrifice—a trespass-offering, a sin-offering, a burnt-offering, and a meat-offering, mingled with oil. On that day, his hand, his foot, and his ear must be tipped and sanctified with blood, (as at the consecration of the priests, Exod. xxix. 20.) The priest must sprinkle of the oil, with his finger, seven times before the Lord. He must likewise dip his finger in the blood, and put it upon the leper's right hand and foot and ear; and *pour* the remainder on his head. The sin-offering, the burnt-offering, and the meat-offering, closed the solemn service.

In reviewing the particulars of this ordinance, you will readily see, that, the cleansing of the leper was, especially, by *sprinkling*—by sprinkling *seven times*. After which he washed himself, and presented his offering. Judge for your-



selves, my dear children, whether it be not probable that the prophet had a respect to this sevenfold sprinkling, when he said, "Go, and wash in," or at "Jordan, *seven times*?"—Whether it is not as if he had said, "Go, and sprinkle, or pour, of the water of Jordan, seven times on the diseased part; or, on thy diseased body?" Impartially considered, this accords best with the ordinance of the leper, and would meet the expectation of the Syrian captain, who says, v. 11, "I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." Yet, had these remarks no weight, and it could be made to appear that the prophet has no respect to the ordinance of the leper, and that Naaman dipped himself seven times in Jordan, it would establish nothing beyond what is granted, viz. that βαπτίζω, in its *secondary* meaning, signifies as well to dip, as to pour or sprinkle. You will remember its *primary* signification is to purify or cleanse by whatever means.

*3d Son.* Then it is a matter of indifference whether Naaman, in washing himself seven times, used the mode of pouring or plunging. Yet the Jewish law contributes not a little in support of the former opinion. —But I hope we have not done with this subject. What a variety of ceremonies ordained for the purifying the healed leper! I suppose there must be contained herein a great deal of Gospel-mystery

and heavenly treasure. While attending to this statement, I could not help praying, " Lord, rend this vail! Open thou mine eyes, that I may see the wonderful things contained in thy law!"

*Father.* Look into this commandment, as into a true mirror, and sin will appear exceeding sinful. Look, with a thoughtful, praying heart, and you will see how precious, and how needed the Lord Jesus Christ is in his atoning blood and sanctifying grace. Look on the subject of this loathsome disease, hear his solitary, pitiable moan, " Unclean! unclean!" In him, see the man whose nature is sin; whose heart, whose breath, whose life are defiled with vile affection and lusts; who, in respect to " wisdom, righteousness, and true holiness, is as one dead," Mortal contagion every where attends his steps. It is dangerous to come near him. The Law has separated him from the society of *the just*. We cannot wonder to hear every one of *them* say, " I have hated the congregation of evil doers: and I will not sit with the wicked." Nay, he himself hastens to go out from the presence of God, and of his saints.

*2d Daughter.* Yet it seems the wound was not incurable. The provisions of the Law suppose a remedy.

*Father.* Nature furnished no means of relief. Nor did any rites which the law appointed precede the cure. Yet there was " hope in Israel concerning this thing." The Law revealed this

truth, and the Gospel proclaims it aloud, "Salvation is of the Lord!" What are ordinances, even the preaching of the Cross, till "the day of *his* power" come, to heal the vile leprosy of sin! Then the sinner, awakening from his death-like slumbers, shews signs of spiritual life. His life is a life of praise. He returns to give thanks unto God.

*2d Son.* Now, I hope we shall be favoured, more particularly, with an illustration of those many rites and sacrifices by which the Law required the recovered leper to acknowledge the mercy of God to him.

*Father.* Christ is the end of that law. His mediatorial character and grace appear almost in every circumstance it required. In the *two birds*, as in the *two goats* presented before the Lord on the day of atonement, you see Christ "manifested to take away our sins." In the *blood* of the bird that was killed, mingled with *water* in an *earthen vessel*, you see *him*, who "came, not by water only, but by water and "blood." Nor can you help recollecting, that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that "the excellency of the power may be of God, "and not of us." And what shall we say of the *instrument* of purification? Behold the incorruptible *cedar*, and the *hyssop* of sweet savour (opposed to each other, 1 Kings, iv. 33, as the largest and the least of plants), tied to the *living bird* by a string of *scarlet wool*. Some think they, herein, see Christ alive from the dead, and

“set forth,” in the glory of his Deity, and the tender mercy of his humanity, “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” *Seven times* the leper was thus sprinkled. How deep the stains of sin! How hard to wash them away! Yet it teaches, how effectually the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus fulfils the desire of an awakened and contrite spirit,—“Wash me *thoroughly* from mine iniquity!” See, the escape of the *living bird*, as from the snare of the fowler, and therein behold the triumphant resurrection of Christ, and the joyful deliverance of the sinner from the curse of the Law by his atoning blood. Let us consider the leper in washing and shaving himself, and repeating these requirements, and learn to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.” See the blood of the trespass-offering applied to the different parts of his body, and make it your prayer to have your *ear* sanctified by the blood of Christ, to hearken and obey, your *hand* to work, and your *feet* to run in the way of God’s commandments—to be “renewed,” in the whole man, “in righteousness and true holiness.” See the *oil* too, on these several parts, and likewise poured on his head; and be it your care to be blessed with those who have the graces of the Spirit of Christ, the beauty and joy of salvation, to adorn their temper and life. Further, to shew how saved sinners should walk, as in the sight of God, in all holy obedience, the oil was also “sprinkled

“seven times,” towards the most holy place, “before the Lord.” The sin-offering, the burnt-offering, and the meat-offering closed the service—to teach you, my children, to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

*Daughter.* This is all delightful, and full of instruction! No wonder that David should say, “We have thought of thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.” The Jewish worship afforded, I conclude, much time, and many a pleasant subject for meditation. No doubt but devout Israelites, under the power of Divine faith, could sometimes see much of Christ in these typical representations. David’s soul seems raised, almost to an extasy; perhaps, when light was shining on one of these mysteries—“O, how love I thy law!” Yet *we* enjoy superabundant advantage, who have the manifestation of *him*, who is “full of grace and truth!”—who have the light of the Gospel shining on these rites. Having this advantage, why have I studied them no more?

*Son.* I hope, sister, that I shall study the Books of Moses more than ever. The illustration given us of many things in the ordinance of the leper, has been very pleasant to me also. We have been searching the Scriptures, in order to find the signification of a *word*: nor have we laboured in vain, in that respect: but we have been surprised with unexpected treasure. What unsearch-

able riches, on every hand, are found, and still to be found in the word of God. *Their* labour is amply repaid who dig in this mine.

*Father.* In determining the general use of the word *baptize* in the sacred Scriptures, it is proper that we should notice some passages in the *New Testament*. The Jews had a custom of washing their hands before eating, Luke xi. 38: "The pharisee marvelled that he," our Lord, "had not first washed," *baptized*, "before dinner." To the same purpose is that remark, Mark vii. 4: "The pharisees, and all the Jews—when they come from the market, except they wash," *baptize*, "they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received and hold, as the washing," *baptizing*, "of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables." You will observe, the Jews are said to have *baptized*, when they only washed their hands or feet, and that after whatever manner. In washing cups and pots, brazen vessels, and even *tables*, they were said to *baptize* them, though not by immersion. You see our translators have not given to βαπτίζω the sense of *dipping*.

*2d Son.* This is plain indeed! Often I wash my hands without dipping them: nor do I ever remember to have seen a servant *dip* a table in water, in order to wash it. Then it is clear, that immersion is not essential to baptism.

*Father.* We have now inquired after the *primary* signification of the word *baptize* in the *ancient Greek classics*: and it is clear from thence



that its meaning is not, exclusively, *to plunge*. We have traced the *general* meaning of the word in the several passages of *the sacred Scriptures* where it is found : nor has any testimony hence appeared to restrain it to this signification. You perceive the result of these inquiries is not unfavourable to the mode we practise. Our way is now prepared for the examination of the sacramental use of the word βαπτίζω. For this word only, in its inflexions, is used in reference to Christian baptism. I would wish to trace it wherever it is found in the New Testament; and examine its several connections and references. Then, I think you will see, and I would wish you to remember, that its most proper and determinate signification is, *to cleanse, to purify*. The use of water in baptism supposes defilement, and is a confession of it. It represents, likewise, the grace of sanctification: and at once pleads and seals the promise of that blessing. Both these ideas, relating to the use of water in baptism, we shall find abundantly illustrated in attending to the rites of purification in the Jewish Church.

The Apostle tells us, that under the law, there were “ *divers washings*”—*baptisms*. So the word is, Heb. ix. 10. Under the Gospel, there is “ *one baptism*”—one ordinance of baptism—one outward sign of inward purifying grace. It was otherwise under the Law. Then were “ *divers baptisms*”—divers ordinances of purification. Not *diverse*, because still re-



*peated* in respect of the same subject. The ordinances were different; the modes different; and they were applied under different circumstances. A little observation of the account Moses gives of them severally, will satisfy you that they were not confined to one individual mode. Some were administered by sprinkling or pouring, others by bathing or plunging.

The case of the *healed leper* we have already considered. For his purification, the priest must *sprinkle* upon him mingled blood and water *seven times*, and make him clean. It remained for him, beside other rites, to wash his clothes, and wash himself with water. And to repeat this part of the service, after seven days.

In many cases, *an unclean person* was required to wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water. See Lev. xi. 25. and xv. 5—8, 16.

In respect of *Aaron and his sons*, on the day of consecration to their office, and before they put on them the holy garments, Moses is thus commanded, Exod. xxix. 4: "And Aaron and  
"his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the  
"tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt  
"wash them with water." After the like manner, the high priest must enter on the solemn service appointed for the great day of atonement. With this difference only, then, he must wash *himself*—not bathe, but wash himself with water taken from the *sanctified laver*, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And, on that day, as often as he put on the

holy garments, he must, after the same manner, wash himself. Lev. xvi. 4, 24. Yet of the man who, on that day, “let go the goat, for “the scape goat,” it was required that he should “wash his clothes and bathe himself in “water.” v. 26.

For the cleansing of *the Levites*, Moses is commanded, Numb. viii. 7.—“*sprinkle water “of purifying* upon them—and let them wash “their clothes—.” Probably this, likewise, was to be with water taken from the sanctified laver.

The “water of purifying,” mentioned here, relates to an ordinance not to be overlooked—

*Daughter.* I must beg your fatherly indulgence a few moments. The mention of the *sanctified laver* revives a wish to understand better some things very singular, that I have read relating to that sacred vessel.

*Father.* The laver was a large vessel of brass—every day supplied with fresh water; for the purpose of washing the priests and the sacrifices. It has just been remarked, that the priests were washed, with water taken thence, at their consecration. Thus consecrated, in a nobler sense, are the “royal priesthood”—whose joyful acknowledgment is—“Unto him “that loved us, and washed us from our sins in “his own blood, and hath made us kings and “priests unto God and his Father; to him be “glory and dominion for ever and ever. “Amen.” This washing must be still renewed.

The priests always served in the sanctuary with their hands and feet bare. And as often as they entered “the habitation of the Lord’s house,” or passed from one kind of service to another, they must wash their hands and their feet. Exod. xl. 30, 31, 32. Thus must *we* “pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” Herein are we taught to “wash *our* hands in innocency, and so” to “compass the altar” of God—“to draw near”—“having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies,” our hands and feet, “washed with pure water.” Heb. x. 22.

The exertions of female piety which, with ready zeal, assisted to prepare a tabernacle for the Most High, are not overlooked by the Holy Spirit. It is pleasant to see, in the sacred record, the women press in troops to the door of the tabernacle, bringing their offerings with them. Just as in the days of John the Baptist—of which our Lord remarked, “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” And, when there was a want of brass for making the sacred laver, concerning which Moses had been instructed, they made a willing sacrifice of the companion of their toilet—the instrument, too often, of vanity and self-admiration. So it is stated, Exod. xxxviii. 8: “And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the *looking-glasses* of the *women* assembling” in troops, “which assembled” in troops, “at

“ the door of the tabernacle of the congre-  
 “ gation.” It seems as if each would say,—  
 “ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that  
 “ will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house  
 “ of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold  
 “ *the beauty of the Lord*, and to inquire in his”  
*tabernacle*. Such forwardness they had before  
 shewn, Exod. xxxv. 22. “ They came both men  
 “ and women ; as many as were willing-hearted,  
 “ and brought bracelets, and ear-rings, and  
 “ rings, and tablets, all jewels of gold : and  
 “ every *one* that offered, *waved* an offering of  
 “ gold unto the Lord.” How much better this,  
 than when they gave their jewels to make an  
 idol, a golden calf ! On this occasion, also, the  
 virtuous woman “ laid her hand to the spindle,  
 “ and her hands held the distaff”—not, as after-  
 wards, in the days of Israel’s apostacy, to  
 “ weave hangings for the grove ;” (2 Kings  
 xxiii. 7.) ; but her ingenuity was sanctified to the  
 decorating of the dwelling-place of the Most  
 High. “ And all the women that were wise-  
 “ hearted, did spin with their hands, and  
 “ brought that which they had spun : both of  
 “ blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine  
 “ linen. And all the women, whose heart  
 “ stirred them up in wisdom, spun goats’ hair.”  
 Exod. xxxv. 25, 26. So, in the building of the  
 spiritual temple, we read of women who  
 “ laboured in the Gospel”—who were St. Paul’s  
 “ helpers in Christ Jesus”—“ who bestowed

“much labour on” the Apostles—and “who laboured much in the Lord.” Phil. iv. 3. Rom. xvi. 3, 6, 12.

*Daughter.* They are lovely examples! Yet I observe, “this also cometh forth from the “Lord of hosts.” He it was who stirred up their hearts—he taught them wisdom in every view—he prepared the instrument for the intended work. I hope I should esteem it an honour to be like minded—to be endued with the same spirit—to be furnished with ability, in any way, and in any degree, to serve the cause of the Redeemer.

*2d Daughter.* Then, let us look upward in prayer. God hath often heard the desire of the humble—often strengthened the bruised reed, and cherished the smoking flax; and made even babes and sucklings his effectual advocates. Who can tell, but it may please him to put a measure of his Spirit upon us, and give us opportunity of service? Let us look about us. Perhaps our work is already prepared—work that we *can* do, and which we *ought* to do.

*Father.* Go, my dear children, and offer willingly unto the Lord. “Whatsoever *your* hand “findeth to do, do it with all your “might.” The Lord bless you, and make you blessings!

Having spoken of the laver in the Jewish tabernacle, it is proper to notice the variation that afterwards took place, when the temple was built, and the priests and the people were

multiplied. Solomon made ten lavers for washing the sacrifices, and one great vessel, called a sea, “a molten sea” for the washing of the priests; with twelve oxen of brass for its base. Perhaps the Holy Spirit alludes to this, when, speaking mystically, of the church of Christ, the temple not made with hands, he says, (Rev. iv. 5.) “And before the throne there was a sea “of glass, like unto crystal”—so pure and transparent. “And” (Rev. xv. 2.) “I saw, as “it were, a sea of glass mingled with fire”—such was the reflection of the rays of glory that fell upon it from the throne of God; “and them “that had gotten the victory over the beast, and “over his image, and over his mark, and over the “number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, “having the harps of God.”

*3d Daughter.* Happy spirits! they have gained a victory indeed! Every stain is washed away! They overcame, through “the blood “of the Lamb, and the word of his testimony!” They shall see their enemies no more for ever! No wonder, their hearts are fixed, their feet are fast, and they cannot leave the shore of that wondrous sea which has swallowed up all their sins. *Why* should they leave it? They have no more wilderness to pass—their toils and conflicts are over. *How* can they leave it? Their Redeemer has triumphed gloriously! They are more than conquerors! The transition is so great and so sudden, that their souls are feasted, transported with wonder and joy!



See their robes, how white! See where the meridian glory of Divine Love, reflected in fervent beams, from that "river," that sea, which, "clear as crystal, proceedeth out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb," shines on their countenance! Their hearts are all inflamed—hear, how they tell their joys abroad! how they "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints!"

*Father.* Delightful song! it has no end, and will be for ever new! My dear children, prize and use the laver. Jesus Christ is "a fountain opened." If we are "now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." One circumstance relating to the laver is worthy of remark. The armies of Israel in the wilderness were often renewing their marches. When the cloud was seen taken up from the tabernacle, every man struck his tent. It belonged to Aaron and his sons to prepare the holy things of the sacred habitation of the Most High for a remove. Those holy things, with only one exception, must be put under a veil, must be wrapped up in a covering. For, even the Levites who carried, must not touch, or look on them, on pain of death. Instructions to this effect are very minutely given to Moses. (See Numb. iv.) The laver only is passed over, in Moses' account, in silence. Indeed, in the



Greek version, it is added as if to supply a defect. That holy vessel is not required to be covered. It seems to have been Jehovah's will that it should be left uncovered,—always open to the view of the people. A lively figure of the grace that is in Christ—"a fountain opened," and ever open. The sacrificers, at all times, could wash their hands and feet from the laver, even when every other vessel was wrapped in a veil. So, in all our travels, may we cleanse our works and ways—wash our guilt and pollution away, in the blood of Christ. Even when the tabernacle is taken down, public worship interrupted, a humble penitent will still find this holy vessel uncovered, this fountain open.

*3d Son.* This was mercy indeed to the Israelites; and a kind intimation of the grace that is come unto us by the revelation of Jesus Christ. But I cannot help thinking of Solomon's "molten sea." What an emblem of the glorious Gospel, and the unmeasurable fulness of Christ! And its wondrous *base*! In those twelve oxen of brass, I behold the Twelve Apostles, and succeeding ministers of Jesus, strong and patient in labour and suffering. See, where they stand, with their faces pointed to every part of the globe, exhibiting their Master, and proclaiming "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins!"

*Father.* It is an instructive, charming figure. But time is too far advanced to admit of our entering upon the last and most eminent *Jewish*

*baptism*: wherein was used *the water of separation*, or of *purifying*. We will now, therefore, commend you to God, and to *this* word of his grace, that it may be made to abide and live in you. Amen!

## CONVERSATION VIII.

*Father.*

I WELL know, my dear children, you do not meet me with reluctance on this occasion, as if to renew your attention to a subject which you have already found dry and uninteresting. You have hitherto regarded it as far other and better than a subject of mere speculation. My heart enjoys a persuasion that it will prove an avenue to a field where are never-failing springs of heavenly consolation; and that you will one day review it as a stratum of rock which, however in itself unprofitable, yet, rightly penetrated by one who seeketh and searcheth for "the true riches," opens upon an incomparable mine—"the unsearchable riches of Christ."

*Son.* Indeed, if I may be the voice of this little company, we have not wanted a recompence for our attention to this subject. It has not altogether been "a spring shut up." The word of God has often been sweet to our taste. In searching the Scriptures, and digging as for hid treasure, we have not toiled in vain. No; but again, and again, we have discovered a vein of heavenly treasure, "more precious than gold!" "Now therefore are we all here

“ present before God, to hear all things that  
 “ are commanded” our dear father “ of God.”

*Father.* Let God be praised! Still I trust  
 “ your labour shall not be in vain.” You have  
 not forgotten, I think, the subjects of our last  
 conversation.

*3d Son.* In our last conversation, we traced  
 the word βαπτίζω where it is used in *the sacred  
 Scripture*, and inquired what signification per-  
 tains to it there. We, likewise, entered on an  
 examination of the *divers baptisms of the Jews*.  
 We considered the washing of *Aaron and his  
 sons*, and the cleansing of *the lepers*. Nor can  
 we find any arguments, arising out of these  
 rites, or from the scriptural meaning of the  
 word, to bespeak the *use*, much less the exclu-  
 sive use, of *dipping* in Christian baptism. I  
 long to hear of the other *Jewish washing* which  
 remains to be considered. It has been mentioned  
 as eminent among the Levitical institutions, and  
 remarkably corresponding with Christian bap-  
 tism.

*Father.* The particulars of it are stated in the  
 ixth chapter of Numbers.

The congregation must provide a *red heifer*,  
 without blemish, and which had not been  
 brought under the yoke. This heifer must be  
 slain, and, by fire, consumed to ashes. See,  
 in this victim, the spotless Jesus giving himself  
 for us, “ not of constraint but willingly,” and  
 appearing in garments dyed with his own blood.  
 This animal must be slain and burnt *without the*

*camp*; or, as in after times, *without Jerusalem*. So, Jesus, "that he might sanctify the people, "suffered *without the gate*." With the finger of the priest, some of the blood must be sprinkled seven times towards the tabernacle of the congregation, in the way that led to it. Our great High Priest too, by his powerful intercession, as by a seven-fold sprinkling, opens unto his people "a new and living way" into heaven itself. During the conflagration, and, as the Jews report, when the fire had rent the carcase of the victim, the priest must take a stick of the incorruptible cedar, and fragrant hyssop, bound together with scarlet wool, "and cast it into "the midst of the burning." v. 7. Mount *Olivet*, in later ages, was the place of these solemnities. Thence this flame, with a grateful perfume, went towering to the skies. There, you will remember, the night in which he was betrayed, (at least in a garden at the foot of the mount,) Jesus suffered unutterable agony: "his sweat "was, as it were, great drops of blood falling "down to the ground." Thence the ardent flame of his affection often went up in prayer to his Father; and thence was his triumphant ascension into heaven. It was further required, v. 9, "A man that is clean shall gather up the "ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without "the camp," or city, "in a clean place; and it "shall be kept, for the congregation of Israel, "for a water of separation: it is a purification "for sin." It was a lively figure of the virtue

and odour, and perpetual efficacy of the death of Christ to purge our sins, and give us “the answer of a good conscience.” No further preparation was needed, but the mixing a portion of these ashes with living, or spring water. This living water with which the ashes were mixed, signified the Spirit of God “which they that believe in Christ do receive.” This “water of separation,” thus prepared, was a sovereign remedy in cases of ceremonial defilement, universally effectual—a striking figure of “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son,” which “cleanseth us from all sin!” And it was solemnly enacted, v. 20, “The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation: because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord, the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean.”

You will not overlook the mode of purifying with these waters. It was that of *sprinkling*: and none other. A clean person, usually a priest, with a bunch of hyssop dipped in this water of separation, sprinkled the unclean—either persons or vessels—and that, not always individually, but often in companies, though they were a hundred. “So shall he sprinkle many nations.” It represented the Gospel of Christ crucified, preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, and received by faith—an effectual remedy for our pardon and sanctification. The prophet Zechariah appears to have

this ordinance in his eye when declaring the superior advantage of Gospel-times, in that famous prophecy, chap. xiii. 1: "In that day  
 " there shall be a fountain opened to the house  
 " of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,  
 " for sin and for uncleanness," or separation,  
 —*i. e.* for a water of separation for uncleanness. It was likewise required that the unclean person should be sprinkled upon, the *third day* after the discovery of uncleanness, as if to teach that "the answer of a good conscience is by the  
 " resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and on the *seventh day*, when his cleansing was perfected. Then it remained for him to wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water. Let us now see how delightfully the Apostle takes occasion from this institution to illustrate the superior efficacy of the blood of Christ, Heb. ix. 13, 14: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and  
 " the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,  
 " sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how  
 " much more shall the blood of Christ, who,  
 " through the eternal Spirit, offered himself  
 " without spot to God, purge your conscience  
 " from dead works to serve the living God?" This writer to the Hebrews seems, likewise, to have respect to this water of separation, in chap. x. 22: "Let us draw near with a true heart, in  
 " full assurance of faith, having our hearts  
 " sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our  
 " bodies washed with pure water." For, though this law especially regarded those persons and



things that were defiled by a dead body, and figured “repentance from dead works;” yet it was a provision whereby men might be purified from their various uncleannesses, whenever they approached the sanctuary with their sacrifices, or to serve, in any manner, “the Holy One of “Israel.” See v. 19. What a significant type of the fountain opened for pardon and sanctification! The ashes of the heifer, impregnated with those of the incorruptible cedar wood, and the fragrant hyssop and scarlet wool, represented the extreme and infinitely meritorious suffering, the agonizing death of Christ—“a sweet savour “unto God.” The living waters figured the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. These mixed together, and, with a bunch of hyssop, *sprinkled* upon the unclean, represented the “heart” of a sinner “*sprinkled* from an evil “conscience, and” his “body washed with pure “water.”

*3d Son.* All this recommends itself to my judgment, and seems to satiate my soul with fatness. Yet a doubt, whether reasonable or not, forces itself on my mind. Is it possible that this sprinkling could be only introductory to a more effectual mode of cleansing required?—and that when the Apostle says, “sanctifying “to the purifying of the flesh,” he meant no more than that it separated unto an effectual purification by *dipping*?

*Father.* It is possible, my dear, to wrest the Scripture, and resist the obvious meaning of the

Holy Spirit. Yet *you* will remember that these ashes, together with the living water, are opposed to “the blood of Christ,” united with “the eternal Spirit.” The *former* availed, ceremonially, “to the purifying of the flesh.” The *latter* purifieth from moral guilt—“purgeth the conscience from dead works.” In the chapter which contains the ordinance we are considering, you will see that this *sprinkling* of the unclean person is repeatedly termed his *purification*. Indeed, the Holy Spirit seems to represent it as of *superior efficacy*: it availed when nothing else could. Silver and gold and other metals, taken amidst the spoils of war, must be made to “pass through the fire:” and even the *melling* of the metal is not sufficient—it must afterwards be “purified with the water of separation.” Num. xxxi. 23. The purification of the unclean was *perfected by sprinkling*. I can scarcely regard the subsequent washing of clothes and bathing as pertaining to that ordinance. Carefully read the chapter, and I think you will see reason to regard these rites as resulting from a different occasion. I will state my views of the subject: without a wish that you should regard them any further than they commend themselves to your understanding and judgment.

In examining this solemn process, you will see (v. 7, 8, 9, 21.) that *the priest who cast the cedar wood, the hyssop and scarlet wool into the burning of the heifer—the man by whom she*

*was burnt—the man who gathered up the ashes—the man who sprinkled the unclean, and any man who touched* (perhaps it means, any one who was at all engaged in preparing or applying) *this holy water*—all these, though otherwise clean, must “wash their clothes, and bathe themselves” “with water, and be unclean until the evening.”

The law determines the same respecting the man who let go the goat for the scape goat, on the great day of atonement. See Lev. xvi. 26. These things our expositors acknowledge to be mysterious—that a clean person, a priest, should be rendered unclean by having to do, in his ministry, with that which cleanseth others. Usually, it is regarded as an intimation of the imperfection of the Law, which, at best, “sanctified” only “to the purifying of the flesh,” and even then left the purifier unclean.

To me it appears beyond a doubt that “the” “water of separation,” wherever it was rightly applied, effectually purified from the uncleanness that occasioned the use of it; and that, in whatever sense the several persons engaged in that solemn service were deemed unclean so as to need washing and bathing, in that same sense, the person who had been sprinkled was judged unclean, and required to wash and bathe. The cases were precisely similar. The question is, what that uncleanness was, and how occasioned? Fellowship with God in this solemn service, could not be the *cause* of uncleanness, yet it may occasion an abasing *sense* of it. When I

hear Job, struck with the manifested glory of God's holiness, cry, "I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes!"—and Isaiah say, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips!"—and Peter exclaim, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" I cannot wonder that the priest to whom it belonged to minister in these peculiarly holy things; or that he who, in so striking a figure, received "the sprinkling of the blood of Christ," should be more than ever vile in his own eyes, and feel greater need of being washed from his uncleanness. Was the man unclean on whom this "water of separation" had been sprinkled? In that figure I see the abased soul of one on whom the doctrine of Christ crucified has fallen like a purifying rain—of him whom the Spirit of truth has conducted "to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." *Then* "shall ye loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations." What a deepened sense of guilt and pollution has he? What need he feels that his whole body and soul and spirit should still be washed and sanctified!

Were the ministers of the Jewish sanctuary, who had to do with eminent "shadows of good things to come," by the Holy Spirit, pronounced unclean—and did they go away and wash their clothes, and bathe themselves in water? It gives me an idea of the abasement,

the self-abbhorrence, that may well possess the soul of the best and holiest of men, who has been ministering in ordinances wherein he has "beheld, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord"—who in his doctrine has, as it were, been gathering the ashes, and sprinkling the blood of Jesus. What faithful preacher of Christ crucified, whose heart has been warmed with his love, and whose ministry has diffused the sweet savour of his name, will not see reason to review his services with abasement, and retire, and, as it were, wash and bathe himself in grief and tears? I have sometimes inclined to think that St. Paul had in his eye the Jewish priest sprinkling this perfumed water with the sweet scented hyssop branch, when inditing that solemn and awakening passage, 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other, the savour of life unto life; and *who is sufficient for these things?*"—and who, conscious of uncleanness, will not retire and bathe?

*3d Son.* How serious a matter to have to do with the ordinances of the sanctuary!—with those things which have respect to the everlasting state of precious souls—and which have much of the glory of Christ in them! How serious a matter, especially, to *minister* in these things! That sound, as if arising out of the reflections we have heard, strikes my ear, and seems to vi-

brate in my soul, "I will be sanctified in them  
 "that come nigh me, and before all the people  
 "I will be glorified!" *They* know not what  
 they do who make light of sacred things.

*Father.* This ordinance of purification was eminent among the "divers washings" of the Jews. It seems to be peculiarly *the Jewish baptism*.

*2d Son.* I was lately struck in reading the account which Moses gives of a solemn covenant transaction between God and the people of Israel at Mount Sinai. To me it appeared to bear *a remarkable resemblance to Christian baptism*. It is possible, when I have read the passage, it may appear to others as it did to me. Here it is, Exod. xxiv. 3—8: "And Moses  
 "came, and told the people all the words of  
 "the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the  
 "people answered with one voice, and said,  
 "All the words which the Lord hath said will  
 "we do. And Moses wrote all the words of  
 "the Lord, and rose up early in the morn-  
 "ing, and builded an altar under the hill,  
 "and twelve pillars, according to the twelve  
 "tribes of Israel. And he sent young men,"  
 (some of the first-born) "of the children of  
 "Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sa-  
 "crificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord.  
 "And Moses took half of the blood, and put it  
 "in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled  
 "on the altar. And he took the book of the  
 "covenant, and read in the audience of the  
 "people; and they said, All that the Lord hath



“ said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses  
 “ took the blood, and *sprinkled* it on the people,  
 “ and said, Behold the blood of the<sup>c</sup> covenant,  
 “ which the Lord hath made with you, concern-  
 “ ing all these words.”

*Father.* The resemblance is, indeed, very striking. The *subjects* of each ordinance the same—members of the visible church, with their seed. The *intent* the same—to affix a confirming seal to a solemn covenant engagement. And the *mode*, in the former case, having been that of sprinkling, seems to indicate, if not require a resemblance likewise therein. The half of the blood was sprinkled on the altar to render God propitious. The other half on the people—the people universally, male and female, parents and children, to signify their being sanctified and set apart for God. Here the sacramental sealing of the Old Testament or covenant, was by the *blood of beasts*. The Gospel shews the new covenant, with its better promises, sealed and confirmed by the *blood of Christ*. And what is baptism, but a copy of that seal, individually applied, by a minister of Christ, in the name of his Lord?

*Daughter.* What a strange conceit that, among the Jews, there was but one kind of baptism, and that by dipping!

*Father.* The writer to the Hebrews, chap. x. ver. 29, in allusion, as it seems to this solemn transaction, represents all, who are under the appointed seal of the Gospel-covenant, as engaged



by most sacred bonds to the Lord. Hence, he directs a very heavy charge against the man who, having been baptized in the name of Christ, became an *apostate*. His guilt, aggravated in the highest degree, is thus described—"who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing—." *Who* was sanctified? The reference appears to be to the apostate from Christianity, who had been dedicated and set apart unto God in baptism. The baptismal water, sprinkled by the appointment of Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, after the manner of the blood of goats and calves sprinkled by Moses the mediator of the Sinai Covenant, was the symbol and figure of the blood of Christ by which the "heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience."

*3d Son.* Never, never, may I fall into the fearful condemnation of an apostate! Lord, "make my heart sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed!"

*Father.* Proof sufficient, I think, has been adduced, to convince you all that there were among the Jews "divers baptisms"—divers kinds of baptism; some by plunging, others by sprinkling. The word the Apostle uses is the same as when he speaks of spiritual gifts, such as prophesying, teaching ruling. (Rom. xii. 6.) "Having then gifts differing." They were entirely diverse from each other.

*Son.* One remark I have made while attend-

ing to the particulars relating to these several baptisms. To me it appears to have weight, in the present argument: I long, Sir, to hear your opinion respecting it. It is this—As far as my observation could go, and as far as my recollection avails me, *the law required no Israelite to be plunged by a priest, or by any other man.* And, if I mistake not, this also is a fact, *none were washed, or baptized, by a priest, or any minister of the sanctuary, otherwise than by pouring or sprinkling.*

*Father.* A good remark—perfectly correct, I believe, and of no little importance. In the subject of our present inquiry, I regard it as more precious than gold. And, as far as my observation goes, it will abide, though tried in the fire. An Israelite, conscious of defilement, must manifest a care to “cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit”—must wash his hands and his feet; and was sometimes required to bathe himself in water. The precept said, “Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes.” But the grace of the promise revealed a washing more effectual: “I will *sprinkle* clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.”—It was ordained that the minister of the Lord should *sprinkle* upon the unclean, water, water and blood, the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer mixed with water, and, some-

times, unmingled blood ;—each representing, in a lively figure, the guilt of sin put away by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ ; and the polluted heart of the sinner cleansed by “ the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of “ the Holy Ghost.” You have already seen what an apt representation of these great things we likewise have in the ordinance of *Christian baptism*.

To bring this interesting part of our subject to a close : you clearly see that baptism, when practised, in the land of Israel, by our Lord’s disciples and apostles, was no novelty. Our Lord followed the example of John. John practised after the rites of the Jewish Church. But, among the divers baptisms of the Jews, *no law is to be found that required one man to be plunged by another*.

*Daughter*. Then, it is very far from being manifest that the terms *baptism* and *immersion* are synonymous. How hastily do men take up opinions unsupported by the authority of Scripture !

*Father*. Yes, and hold them fast too. While we are considering the sacramental sense of the word βαπτίζω there is one passage that I wish you particularly to notice. It relates to the wondrous passage of the children of Israel through the paths of the deep. It is found, 1 Cor. x. 1, 2 : “ Moreover, brethren, I would “ not that you should be ignorant, how that all “ our fathers were under the cloud, and all

“passed through the sea. And were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud, and in the sea.” The *Israelites* were now in a situation, perhaps, not unlike to that of *Christian converts with their households*. They had embraced the promise, which is the ground of consolation likewise to believing Gentiles. They had left an idolatrous and defiling country. They were about to enter into solemn covenant with God—into an earlier dispensation of the same covenant that is sealed in Christian baptism. They were “confessing themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” And the providence of God wonderfully provided for the ratifying his promise and their engagement, by a seal solemnly and universally applied—“they were all baptized unto” or into “Moses”—by baptism, they were initiated into that dispensation of the covenant of which Moses was the mediator.

*Daughter.* Well, and how baptized?

*Father.* Not plunged, as the Egyptians were. They were sprinkled. As God sent a strong east wind to divide and drive back the waters, the same powerful instrument was no doubt employed to continue them in this state. Now, by the mighty agitation into which the waters were cast, it is easy to conceive that the passing Israelites must be sprinkled with the spray of the tossing waves. The first baptism, then, that we read of in Scripture was performed without immersion, and that, too, by Him who best knows

the signification of his own institutions\*. A righteous discrimination seems to have taken place—the same discrimination which, in the last day, shall fearfully solemnize the appearance of our Lord in the clouds of heaven. Pharaoh must no longer have to say, “I know not the Lord.” He must *see the Majesty* he has so long and so obstinately resisted. “The night is far spent, the day is at hand,” and never did an opening day unfold scenes more tremendous, Exod. xiv. 24, 25 : “It came to pass, that, in “the morning watch, the Lord looked upon “the host of the Egyptians, *through the pillar “of fire and of cloud*, and troubled the host “of the Egyptians.” From the cloud, which he made his chariot, issued forth devouring flames, accompanied, probably, with mighty thunderings, together with every other mark of his indignation and anger. Unhappy men! The wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost. A vial of insupportable wrath was opened and poured out *on them who knew not God*. While, from the same sovereign Lord, probably by means of the same cloud, a rich blessing, like a refreshing dew, the lovely emblem of covenant grace, came upon the ransomed tribes of Israel. And, in the same awful passage, *they all*, young and old, parents and children, “all were baptized unto Moses, in “the cloud and in the sea.”

\* I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea; *whose waves roared*. Isa. li, 15.

*Daughter.* All baptized by sprinkling—and without a murmur—all satisfied—not one voice muttering, “There is no baptism, but by plunging!”

*Father.* Yet this appears to have been of the nature of *Christian baptism*. The Apostle evidently regards and mentions it as a seal of the same covenant; though not of the same dispensation of that covenant. *Then*, the covenant was in the hands of *Moses* their mediator. *Now*, with displays of more abundant grace, it is in the hands of Christ our Mediator. They were baptized into Moses. *We* are baptized into Christ. They, and their offspring with them, into the promise of grace and salvation, in a great degree “hid from ages and from generations.” We, and our seed, into the promise of “grace, that is come unto us by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

*Son.* An instructive record indeed! After this, I cannot but wonder that any controversy should remain about the mode or the subjects of baptism.

*Father.* My heart’s desire is, that the word of the Lord should have free course. The Lord “make me,” and my dear children, “to understand the way of his precepts!” nor “suffer us to admit any thing into the rule of our faith or practice which wants the stamp of Divine inspiration!”

*3d Son.* Nor shall we, I trust, be ever suffered to resist the Holy Ghost, by indulging



prejudice against any one opinion that candour would confess to be of God.

*Father.* One statement more must suffice for this evening.

You will recollect that, in a former conversation, baptism was considered as *a significant sign of sanctifying grace*. Sanctification is the great blessing of the covenant of which baptism is a seal. No wonder if, in that seal, as in a lively figure, you see represented *the grant of that blessing*. So, immortal life, the blessing of the first covenant, in a very expressive manner was denoted in the appointed sign and seal—the *tree of life* flourishing with verdure and fruit in the midst of paradise, till sin entered. Now, to see how perfect the allusion is, and how exactly the sign answers to the thing signified, I wish you to notice the manner in which the bestowment of sanctifying grace is represented in the word of God. This circumstance, if I mistake not, will give you an idea of the manner in which baptism, the sensible sign of that grace, may be expected to be practised. And your Bibles will satisfy you that this, especially, if not invariably, is by *pouring or sprinkling*. To a sinner, pressed with distressful wants, who finds that there is no help in himself, and to whom the whole creation appears but dry and thirsty land, delightful are those accents from the throne of God, Psal. lxxii. 6: “*He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth.*” Isa. xlv. 8:



“*Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness—*.” Isa. xlv. 3: “*I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring.*” Who, in these promises, can help seeing the great blessing of the covenant? And who, without violence, can separate the idea of baptism, the seal of the covenant, from the *manner* in which that blessing is conferred? Again, Ezekiel xxxvi. 25: “*I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean—*.” Joel ii. 28: “*I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh —*.” Zech. xii. 10: “*I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications—*.” Such was St. Paul’s grateful review of this inestimable grant, Titus iii. 5: “*— not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*” So, when the application of the blood of Christ, the only meritorious cause of purification, is spoken of, it is — “*the blood of sprinkling*”—and “*the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.*”

*2d Daughter.* Instructive and encouraging promises indeed! Precious grace! and precious Christ!—to one whose heart, like the parched heath, breaketh for the very fervent longing

it hath for these showers of Divine blessing! Happy moment, when, in some kind promise or merciful token, a rising cloud is seen, though "no bigger than a man's hand!" Happy soul, on whom this heavenly dew distils! Happy family, happy church, happy nation, happy world, when these "times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord!"

*Son.* Yes, sister; it is thus the God of our salvation "satiates the weary soul, and replenisheth every sorrowful soul."

And do you perceive how this grace, dropping as the rain, is signified in the pouring or sprinkling of water in baptism? The perpetual verdure of the *tree of life*, in the garden of Eden, was not a more just and significant figure of the promised blessing of the covenant of innocence, than water, thus applied in baptism, is of the grace that comes to us by "Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant."

*Father.* There needs no comment of mine on these remarks. You already see, that our practice of baptizing by sprinkling, is not without an appearance of scriptural reason. But our time is expired. And in the statement now given of the Jewish baptismal rites—the solemn seal affixed to the great covenant transaction at Mount Sinai—the baptism of the hosts of Israel in the passage of the Red Sea—and the figure by which the Holy Spirit chooses to express the bestowment of the grace signified in baptism, you have enough to think of till our next meeting. Adieu!

## CONVERSATION IX.

*Father.*

MY dear children, you have, I doubt not reviewed the subjects of our former conversations. Remarks were therein offered relative to the primary institution of Christian baptism, and the classical and the sacramental signification of the word used for baptism in the original Greek. The “divers washings” of the Jewish dispensation were likewise considered; together with the solemn baptism of the Israelites in the passage of the Red Sea; and afterwards at Mount Sinai. We also contemplated the manner of Christian baptism, in the figurative representation which the Divine Spirit has been pleased to give us of the bestowment of that grace which is signified thereby.

*3d Son.* These several views of the subject unite to convince us that plunging cannot, with candour, be regarded as the exclusive mode of baptism. Every representation strongly pleads for pouring or sprinkling. The argument to us seems conclusive, which arises out of those figures by which the word of God represents the grant of that inward grace, of which the use of water in baptism is the sign. Yet I have a dif-

ficulty, which your fatherly kindness will suffer me to state.

Are there not, in St. Paul's Epistles, some passages wherein baptism is spoken of as being, in the formal manner of it, a representation and figure of the *burial and resurrection of Christ*?

*Father.* It has been said, that this is the Apostle's meaning; and therefore, that the subject of baptism must be dipped entirely under, and raised up out of the water. But I wish you to bring this sentiment to the sacred touchstone, and inquire how far it will accord with the testimony of the Spirit in other Scriptures. We know that the prophet Jonah, in lying three days in the belly of the fish, was a sign of our Lord's remaining the like time in the grave. But we want testimony whereby to prove that the mode of baptism was ever intended to be a sign of the believer's being buried and risen with Christ. We know, likewise, that baptism is an instituted sign of sanctifying grace; and in tracing the representations, in Scripture, of the bestowment of this grace, we have seen that the Holy Spirit abundantly prefers the figures of *pouring and sprinkling*. But, it is proper we should read the passages alluded to.

*Son.* I have one of them here. It is in Rom. vi. 1—5: "What shall we say then? Shall we  
 "continue in sin, that grace may abound? God  
 "forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin,  
 "live any longer therein? Know ye not, that as  
 "many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ

“ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we  
 “ are buried with him, by baptism, into death,  
 “ that, like as Christ was raised up from the  
 “ dead, by the glory of the Father, even so we  
 “ also should walk in newness of life. For if  
 “ we are planted together in the likeness of his  
 “ death, we shall be also in the likeness of his  
 “ resurrection.”

*Father.* The other Scripture you may find in Col. ii. 11—13: “ In whom also ye are circum-  
 “ cised with the circumcision made without  
 “ hands, in putting off the body of the sins of  
 “ the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ;  
 “ buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye  
 “ are risen with him, through the faith of the  
 “ operation of God, who hath raised him from  
 “ the dead...having forgiven you all your tres-  
 “ passes.”

You will observe, that the Apostle, in the connection of these representations, is strenuously urging on believers in Christ a regard to practical Christianity. And he grounds his exhortation on truths of the greatest weight and influence. Not on the circumstance of their bodies having been transiently conformed to the local state of Christ's body in his burial and resurrection; but on the mediatorial acts, the sufferings, and triumphs of Christ; who, as a common person, in all these wonderful circumstances, represented his people. The plain and important meaning of St. Paul appears to be this—“ The Lamb of God” hath taken “ away

“the sin of the world.” His resurrection demonstrates the efficacy of his atoning death. By *faith*, sinners are brought “into the fellowship of Christ:” insomuch that they may be said, virtually, to have satisfied the law, in his obedience unto death; and to have “passed from death to life,” and from grace to glory, in his resurrection and ascension. This *faith* is professed in baptism by the person baptized, or by the believing parent who dedicates to the Lord the children whom he hath given. Therefore, baptism is represented as their initiation—their entrance on the participation of these sublime advantages. Hence the Apostle Peter, in the passage to which we have already referred, speaks of the profession of faith in baptism, by a convert to Christianity, whether personally or as the head of his family, as answerable to the *entrance* of Noah with his household into the ark. The one, as well as the other, turning away from creature-confidences, as “refuges of lies,” repairs to the great ordinance of Heaven, and trusts for salvation therein. This is “like precious faith.” It furnishes “the answer of a good conscience by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

This is truth obvious and interesting—truth that has a mighty influence to command the subjection of a saved sinner to the will of his Deliverer. There remains no reason for searching for a formal representation of the burial and resurrection of our Lord, in the mode of bap-



tism: nor can I suppose any advantage in the discovery. The same truth is delightfully stated by the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians, (ch. ii. 4—6.) *without any reference to baptism*: “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love “wherewith he loved us, even when we were “dead in sin, hath quickened us together with “Christ, (by grace ye are saved,) and hath “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” This sets Christian privilege unmeasurably high, and shews the hope of a genuine believer in Christ to be “an anchor, sure and “stedfast.”

*Daughter.* Truly, these are privileges and hopes that I cannot hear of with indifference. My soul regards them as immensely great—yet, I trust, not unattainable. All the glory of the world is a vain shew in the comparison. The fairest profession of Christianity is nothing without them. “Blessed Spirit, shew me that, “in being baptized into the faith of Christ, I “am baptized *into Christ*—into his death and “burial—into his resurrection and exaltation— “and into fellowship with him in all the benefits “resulting from his abasement on earth, and his “glory in heaven.” I am not solicitous about the *mode* whereby, in baptism, my faith in Christ is professed; but I want to be satisfied that my *faith* is such as will truly and for ever constitute me a “partaker of Christ.”

*Son.* Indeed, sister, it would be happy for



us, if we could improve our baptism to the end which the Apostle so delightfully illustrates. It is an assurance full of consolation, that, by the death and burial of Christ, sin is slain; and that, in Christ, dying on the cross and imprisoned in the tomb, there is virtue to destroy the power and the very being of sin in the hearts of believers. It is an animating truth, that, in Christ's resurrection, his people *virtually* arose, and that they will never cease to know "the power of his resurrection," till they fully possess *eternal life*. What an excellency in baptism, as it initiates into that *covenant* wherein these advantages are provided; and is a profession of that *faith* through which they are communicated! I would gladly bow to the authority of my Lord in whatever mode he has appointed; but I look for these advantages, not from baptism in any form, but from the operation of that faith which is professed in baptism. I would entertain a humble hope of being "planted together in the likeness of" my Saviour's "death"—not by being put under the water, but by "crucifying the old man." I hope to be planted together "in the likeness of his resurrection"—not by being raised up out of the water, but by "walking in newness of life."

*3d Son.* Yet, is it not possible, that, in these expressions, the Apostle may have had an allusion to the mode of baptism?

*Father.* To me, it appears that the Apostle,

in these expressions, has no respect to any mode of baptism; but to the efficacy of that faith which is therein professed, and to the sublime advantages it secures. I am confirmed in this sentiment by the words which immediately follow: "Knowing this, that our old man is "*crucified* with him, that the body of sin might "be destroyed, that henceforth we should not "serve sin." The fellowship, then, of a believer with *Christ crucified*, is a fact as certain and delightful, as with *Christ buried and rising*. And if, in the mode of baptism, there must be a formal resemblance to the latter, why not to the former? Why is not the *cross*, that most important and memorable circumstance of his humiliation, introduced into this ordinance? Nothing of this kind was necessary. The resemblance, together with the advantage, is altogether moral and spiritual.

I think I might add, *it is not possible* that these figures could intend the mode of baptism. Baptism was instituted to be a seal of the covenant of grace—it is a sign and figure of the great blessing of that covenant, "the washing "of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy "Ghost, which is *shed on us* abundantly, "through Jesus Christ." Then, in my view, it is impossible that it should likewise be a figure and representation of our Lord's burial and resurrection.

*Son.* It is evident, I think, beyond all controversy, that, in representing the bestowment

of the grace of the covenant sealed in baptism, the Holy Spirit has made choice of the figure of *pouring or sprinkling*. Nor can the allusion of many of those Scriptures to *baptism*, and particularly of that just repeated, be regarded as matter of doubt. It cannot, therefore, be supposed, that a figure entirely different, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and by the same sacred penman, should be used to illustrate the same grant of blessing in this ordinance.

*Father.* The inference, you perceive, is unavoidable—the Apostle has a respect, not to the mode of baptism, but to the influence of that faith which is professed in this ordinance.

Perhaps an intimation of that, too, may be found among the shadows that, now are done away. In reading the Levitical Law, you will often meet with this expression, in respect of persons ceremonially unclean—“he shall wash himself, and be *unclean until the evening*.” The Jews began their day at evening. The meaning, therefore, is, “he shall be unclean to the end of this, and the beginning of a new day.” It seems to represent to *the Jews*, their subjection to those legal ordinances until the day of the Messiah, when they should be abolished—and to represent *unto us* man’s pollution by sin, till he is brought to a *new day* of salvation by Christ—till he become a new creature. The Jew, discharged from ceremonial rites, rested from “burdens which neither he

“nor his fathers were able to bear,” and arose to “the liberty wherewith Christ made *him* free.” The believing Gentile, “putting off “the body of the sins of the flesh,” becomes dead to the law, the world, and sin; and, being “quickened together with Christ, awakes to “newness of life,” and to the delights of a new day. In a yet more delightful sense, “we “which have believed do enter into rest.” In comparison of future glory, it is night, or, at best, but twilight, with us here; but, “when “the night” shall be *fully* “spent,” our present and secondary advantages, like the moon and stars and lamps, will be lost in the unclouded brightness of an eternal day. The change, in either respect, is spiritual and divine.

It is this undressing, this resting, this shrinking, as it were, into death and the grave, away from the dominion of former masters, sin and Satan, to be raised up together with Christ, which is the change the Apostle refers to. In the crucifixion and death, the burial and resurrection of Christ, is found the procuring cause and pledge of it.

There is one further representation in the word of God, which, I apprehend, will greatly contribute to your satisfaction on this subject. I mean, “*the baptism of the Holy Ghost*”—in the promise, and in the grant of it. There was a prediction and promise of the *descent of the Holy Spirit*, under the denomination of baptism. And there was a remarkable fulfilment of that prediction, in such a manner as to

exemplify the mode, and constitute a very expressive representation of the spiritual design of that ordinance. Memorable are the words of our Lord's herald, Matt. iii. 11: - "I indeed baptize you with water, unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: *he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.*"

Equally remarkable is the fulfilment of this prophecy, Acts ii. 1—4: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all, with one accord, in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind; and it filled the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire: and it sat upon each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Here is the great promise to the Apostles fulfilled—a promise that their Lord, after his ascension into heaven, should "baptize" them "with the Holy Ghost, and with fire"—fulfilled in his descent upon them, "in cloven tongues, like as of fire." And this *falling of the Spirit upon them* is expressly and repeatedly denominated *baptism*. Reflect a moment—could this have been, if the terms baptism and immersion were synonymous?

*3d Son.* Yet, I observe, it is said, "There

“ was a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all  
 “ the house where they were sitting”—they  
 were encompassed with this wind, as if im-  
 mersed. May not this be the event which  
 John foretold under the denomination of bap-  
 tism?

*Father.* Remember, the Apostles did not  
 plunge themselves, much less were they plung-  
 ed by others, into this sacred breath of the Lord.  
 But the wind, with a tremendous sound, came  
 rushing upon them, “ and filled the house where  
 “ they were sitting.” You will, likewise, re-  
 member, the promise was, “ He shall baptize  
 “ you with the Holy Ghost, *and with fire.*”  
 Observe the event—“ and there appeared unto  
 “ them cloven tongues, *like as of fire*, and it sat  
 “ upon each of them.” Herein was the fulfil-  
 ment of the promise: and this descent of the  
 Spirit is expressly called baptism.

By attending to other Scriptures, you will see  
 this statement confirmed. Our Lord had pro-  
 mised, Acts i. 5: “ John, truly, baptized with  
 “ water, but ye shall be *baptized with the Holy*  
 “ *Ghost*, not many days hence.” St. Peter, in  
 relating to the Apostles at Jerusalem the parti-  
 culars of his visit to the house of Cornelius,  
 tells them how this was fulfilled, Acts xi. 15:  
 “ As I began to speak, *the Holy Ghost fell on*  
 “ *them*, as on us at the beginning. Then re-  
 “ membered I the words of our Lord, how that  
 “ he said, John indeed baptized with water, but  
 “ ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.”



This seems, invariably, to have been the manner of the *baptism of the Holy Ghost*. In reference to the converts at Samaria, it is said, (Acts viii. 15.) Peter and John “prayed for them, that “they might receive the Holy Ghost: for as “yet he was *fallen upon* none of them, only “they were baptized in the name of the Lord “Jesus.” In all this we are divinely taught, that the formal manner and mode of baptism is represented in the descent of the Spirit—his *falling upon* the Apostles and other subjects of grace.

*Son.* Blessed baptism! It is a divine unction—it is the anointing oil poured on the head. The understanding is first sanctified, and thereby the heart—the whole man. What more is wanting to constitute demonstration? After this, how can we, while revering the Scriptures, maintain that immersion is essential to baptism?

*3d Son.* I confess that conviction flashes on my mind with increasing power. Yet I wish to carry my appeal more directly to *matters of fact*—to search for the mode of baptism among the sacred records of the practice of it. I have been reflecting on St. *John the Baptist*—Does it not appear, from Scripture representations, that he baptized by immersion? One while, this venerable man is baptizing in Jordan—then, in “Enon, because there was much “water there \*.”

\* In the original, πολλὰ ὑδατῶν—literally, “many wa-



*Father.* I cannot wonder, that a slight reading of these statements should have perplexed you. But when circumstances have been fairly explained, your good sense shall determine what conclusion appears to be sanctioned by "the Spirit of truth."

In order to ascertain the *manner* in which baptism is to be administered, we have inquired into the primary and sacramental use of the word. We have seen representations of it, in the "divers baptisms" of the Jews—in the baptism of the Israelites into Moses, in their awful passage through the paths of the sea, and afterwards at Mount Sinai—in the promise and bestowment of the sanctifying grace—and in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. In all these, and other particulars occasionally introduced, you have seen the practice of baptism by *pouring*, or *sprinkling*, supported by ample testimony. You will now have to judge for yourselves, whether, in these references to John's baptism, there is any thing to enfeeble this support.

To me it appears obvious, that, had John been engaged in baptizing, though by immersion, those only who, in personal conversation, had satisfied him of their "repentance unto life," there would have been no occasion for

"ters"—*i. e.* many springs or rivulets. "They stopped all the *fountains and brooks*, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find *much water*." 2 Chron. xxxii. 4.

the abundant waters of a river. Accommodation sufficient might have been found almost any where. Private baths, it seems, were frequent in that country. Prepossessed, as the public mind was, in favour of John, he might have had access to almost any of them. And, in this case, nothing could have been more convenient and desirable. But, it seems, the case was different. We are informed, Matt. iii. 5, 6, that there “went out to him *Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about, and were baptized of him in* (or, at—the preposition is used in either sense,) *Jordan, confessing their sins.*” From this statement, we are led to regard John’s baptism as a *national purification*, designed to be introductory to the appearance of the Messiah and his kingdom. Then, engaging in so public and extensive a service, we cannot wonder at finding the herald of our Lord near the banks of a river. Though immersion were not the mode intended, he would see an *expediency*—he would soon be convinced of the *necessity* of a situation of this nature. The waters of Jordan, or of Enon, would be needful for the refreshment of so great a concourse, assembled from remote parts of the country; and for the use of their cattle. “Let it be considered how valuable and *scarce* water was in those parts—how hot the climate—how numerous the crowds which flocked to John’s baptism—from how distant parts they came—how long they tarried to hear his

“ doctrine and instructions; for the mere act  
 “ of baptizing was the least part of St. John’s  
 “ mission and of the people’s flocking to him:  
 “ —let these be considered, and there will  
 “ appear sundry good reasons for his choosing  
 “ this well-watered and fruitful country for the  
 “ place of his preaching, without any regard to  
 “ the convenience of dipping,” a mode which  
 by no means accorded with the Jewish ideas of  
 purification. How strange, how absurd would  
 it have sounded, in the ears of his Jewish au-  
 dience, had he said, “ I indeed *dip or plunge*  
 “ you with water, but there cometh one after me,  
 “ who shall *dip or plunge* you with the Holy  
 “ Ghost and with fire.” Had he thus preached  
 or acted, as indeed he must have done, if, ac-  
 cording to the Baptists, immersion is the only  
 signification the word βαπτίζω will admit of,  
 then I am persuaded that all men would not  
 have counted him a Prophet, but a deceiver of  
 the people.

*Son.* I am at a loss to see how such a host,  
 flocking “ from Jerusalem, and Judea, and all  
 “ the region round about,” could, *with any*  
*proper and needful decorum*—nay, indeed, at  
 any rate—be baptized by immersion. Common  
 sense will conclude, that men and women (to  
 say nothing of children) were not dipped in  
 the garments they wore thither. The holy  
 temper and the mortified manners of St. John,  
 will not, for a moment, suffer us to suppose  
 that they were, publicly and indiscriminately,

plunged, without a dress. Yet, *if plunged*, what other alternative can be found?

*2d Son.* I am sure, brother, I cannot relieve the difficulty. Indeed, to me there appears something extravagant in the idea of such multitudes being dipped *by one man*. Till I find it clearly attested by the word of truth, I shall scarcely deem it *possible*, were his bones iron, and his flesh brass, or was his life preserved by continued miracle.

*Daughter.* Good man, I cannot help thinking, if such were the fact, what a life he must lead, and what a spectacle he must appear—his proper element half deserted; while, from morning till night, for many successive days and weeks, he had his standing in water.

*Father.* The supposition is involved in difficulty on every hand. To me it appears incredible, that, together with preaching and necessary avocations, during the short period of his ministry, such an arduous work could have been effected. It is far more probable that these multitudes were baptized unto John, as their fathers were unto Moses, by sprinkling. Thus the purification would be effected after the manner that had been established by long-continued practice under the law. Then, the record contains nothing marvellous, nothing incredible, nothing from which the purest imagination would recoil. Multitudes, standing in ranks beside the stream of Jordan or of Enon, might, in some easily discovered way, and without extreme

labour, have had those waters *shed upon them*, and that abundantly.

The same remark will apply to the *three thousand* who, by baptism, were added to the church *in one day*. These, no doubt, were men and women indiscriminately: and, for ought we know, “their offspring with them.” But I cannot help questioning the possibility of the immersion of so many, in so short a time, and with due regard to decency. Had all the Twelve Apostles, in the interval of public address and personal converse, and necessary avocations, been fully occupied in this service, I think, without a miracle, both time and strength must have failed them.

*3d Son.* I cannot dispute the justness of these remarks. They carry conviction with them. Yet there is something very particular in the expressions used in the relation of *our Lord's baptism*, and the baptism of the *Ethiopian eunuch*. In reading those accounts, I have been led to infer that immersion was made use of.

*Daughter.* I have a short question to ask—What could be the *reason of our Saviour's baptism*, since he was without sin?

*Father.* My dear, our blessed Lord could not need baptism as a mean of purification from moral pollution: for “he knew no sin.” But, he became subject to the ceremonial law, and was liable to ceremonial defilement. Even the immaculate Jesus, inhabiting a world so full of

pollution, and intimately conversant with publicans and sinners, would, in this respect, be much exposed. An ordinance of purification, therefore, might properly be applied to him. It was his pleasure, perhaps, to substitute baptism, *now* in reference to himself, and *afterwards* in reference to his followers, in the place of all other rites. Some have put this construction on that reply to John, "Thus it behoveth us to fulfil all righteousness." Such was our Lord's entrance on his public ministry. And this the seal affixed to his solemn dedication of himself to the service of his heavenly Father, in the great work of redemption.

*3d Son.* Blessed Redeemer! this was love indeed: love expressed in wondrous words, and in more wondrous works! "Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart!"

But my sister's very natural and proper inquiry being answered, I wish to propose the difficulty I have alluded to. In the account of our Lord's baptism, Matt. iii. 16, it is said, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway *out of the water*—." And in the story of the Eunuch's baptism, Acts viii. 38, 39, it is said, "they went down both *into* the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up *out of the water*—" These expressions seem to indicate the use of immersion.



*Father.* Indeed, many an honest inquirer after truth, not acquainted with the original language, has been imposed upon by the sound of these prepositions introduced into our English version of the New Testament. Yet, properly understood, the sacred text determines nothing more than this—Our Lord, “when he was baptized, went up straightway *from* the water.” And “Philip and the eunuch went down both “of them,” from the chariot, “*to* the water”—and they “came up *from* the water.” The preposition here translated *into*, is the same that our Lord makes use of when he directs Peter to provide the tribute-money, Matt. xvii. 27: “Go down *to* the sea, and cast a hook—” Not, “go down *into* the sea—” The other preposition is used indifferently for *from*, and *out of*. Matt. xii. 42: “Queen of the south—” came *from* the uttermost parts of the earth—” Rom. vii. 24: “Who shall deliver me from the “body of this death?”

*Son.* Well, brother, I believe you are satisfied that there is nothing in those phrases to invalidate the testimony we have found so strong in favour of pouring or sprinkling. If any doubt remain, recollect what followed our Lord’s baptism—the instructive representation granted immediately on our Saviour’s coming up from Jordan. “And lo, the heavens were opened unto him, “and he”—John—“saw the Spirit of God *descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.*”



There is baptism in its spiritual signification, and, I must suppose, in its proper form.

*Daughter.* Yes, brother, and you might have added, Think of the Philippian jailor and his household, baptized at midnight, in the prison, or, at most, in the prison-house, and by his prisoners. How can it, with reason, be imagined that this was by immersion?

*Father.* It is likewise worth your while to read the record of the baptism of Cornelius with his family and friends. Their baptism was two-fold. They had the sign, and the thing signified. First, they were baptized with the Holy Ghost, which was "*poured out,*" and "*fell upon them.*" Then with water—water, as it should seem, brought them for the purpose. Few impartial readers but would think us justified in concluding, that the sensible sign was applied after the *same form and manner* with the spiritual gift and grace represented thereby. You will find the narrative, Acts x. 44—48: "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost *fell on all them* which heard the word. "And they of the circumcision which believed, "were astonished, as many as came with Peter, "because that on the Gentiles, also, was *poured out* the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they "heard them speak with tongues, and magnify "God. Then answered Peter, Can any man "forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost

“as well as we? And he commanded them to  
“be baptized in the name of the Lord.”

There needs no comment on this passage of Scripture history. You have enough to exercise your thoughts till our next opportunity of renewing the subject. “The Father of Lights” be with you!

NOTE.—It is certain that no text of Scripture has ever been more perverted by the Baptists, than these words of our Lord,—“Suffer it to be so now, for  
“thus it behoveth us to fulfil all righteousness.” Having unsettled the mind of a young convert, by a few superficial arguments (to discover the fallacy of which he has probably but little time, and still less opportunity), they then, with great solemnity, press upon him the words of our Saviour: for they know by experience, that if they can once make it appear to him to be a Divine command, no water will be considered an obstacle to his obedience in the zeal and fervour of his first love to Christ. Thus, many an “unstable soul has been beguiled,” many a “silly  
“woman led captive.” Though the being dipped is most unquestionably a work of *supererogation*, it being no where commanded in Scripture, and those who affirm that it is essential to baptism, are wise above what is written;—yet were we all to perform this meritorious deed, and to be dipped once a quarter, according to the practice of some of the German Baptists; were we all to submit to this act of *penance*, more severe, probably, than any the Church of Rome enacts in its present lax state of discipline, we could not be thereby justified. Our adorable Surety, in his life, and in his death, fulfilled all righteousness, that the salvation of all who truly believe in him might be complete. After we have done all, yea, after we have been dipped, we should be unprofitable servants; if

not more so than we were before, in that we have increased an unnecessary division in the Church of Christ. Away, then, with every burdensome ceremony. Let us stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free from them, nor be entangled again in any yoke of bondage, though Scripture itself be perverted to effect it. "We perceive" and lament, "that in all" this, ye Baptists "are too  
"superstitious."—EDITOR.

## CONVERSATION X.

*Father.*

WE are drawing to the close of this important and interesting subject. The time it has occupied is not lost. You have had opportunity of stating your difficulties, and usually the light of God's word has prevailed to remove them. The Spirit of truth has, I trust, very graciously accompanied these exercises with his blessing; and I cannot suppress a hope that advantages of the highest consideration have been gained.

*Son.* Unto me these occasions have continually been pleasant and improving. Never has my mind been brought so fully under the power of the word of God as by these means. Nor had I ever so clear a discernment of grace and privilege, or of duty and obligation. The Scriptures have been delightfully opened to my apprehension: and I can truly say, the bread of life, broken on these several occasions, has been sweet, incomparably sweet, to my taste! I believe we are all united in this thankful and joyful acknowledgment.

*3d Son.* Indeed, brother, you have expressed no more than the genuine sentiment and feeling of my heart. I had my scruples, and I could

scarcely expect to find them completely removed. But, as stated one after another, they have been lost in the manifestation of the truth; as the shadows disappear before the resplendent glory of the sun. Experience has encouraged, and will encourage me to state my difficulties—to come to the light, that I may not walk in darkness.

When, in our last conversation, I mentioned St. Paul's words—"buried with him in baptism"—I little thought that the support which the metaphor therein used *seemed* to afford to the mode of plunging, was only in idea. Yet so it was found when brought into the light shining out of other Scriptures. Likewise, while we were contemplating the baptism of the Holy Ghost—John's baptism—the baptism of our Lord—and the practice of baptism by our Lord's Disciples in his name, conviction irresistibly struck my mind—I was constrained to admit that the testimony of the Spirit, on the subject of baptism, clearly favours the mode of pouring or sprinkling.

Yet I have still a difficulty; and I must still be troublesome. We have contemplated our Saviour on the banks of Jordan, baptized with water, and with the Holy Ghost: but, there was another baptism, which he is represented as realizing: it seems to relate to his last sufferings. Those sufferings, I think, in prophetic language, are represented by deep waters. Sometimes, I recollect, this baptism has been termed a *baptism*

*of blood.* I wish, however, to hear of the nature, and the manner of it.

*Father.* I am well pleased, my dear, that you have brought to my recollection a sacred representation highly instructive and interesting. I must, however, premise that, though our Lord's sufferings are metaphorically represented by deep waters, yet baptism no where signifies suffering: its proper and obvious design is to *initiate*. Suffering, as an accident, may be connected with it, but is not properly of it. Nor has it its name from the mode in which water is applied, but from the new tincture, or character expected in one who, washed from his sins, "putteth on the Lord Jesus."

But your remark leads to another very instructive view of the subject. It has already appeared that, under the Jewish dispensation, there were "divers baptisms." We have noticed different *water* baptisms. Beside these, it appears there was a baptism of *oil*; and there was a baptism of *blood*. Each of these, like those of water, was an *initiating* ordinance. Prophets and kings, at their designation to their respective offices were baptized with oil. And this sacred unction denoted their office-character, with all its proper qualifications. You have seen, in the Levitical institutions, that the *priests*, at the time of their being set apart to the service of the sanctuary, were all washed with *water*, and anointed with *oil*: and that they received an application of *blood*—sacred blood

the blood of a sacrifice set apart for God. Such was the consecration of our great High Priest. At his entrance on his ministry, he was baptized of John, *in* or *at* Jordan. And immediately he was anointed with the Holy Spirit. “And lo, “the heavens were opened unto him, and he “saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, “and lighting upon him.” Nor could he enter into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us, before he had been baptized with *blood*. Of old, “the ram of consecration” was the sufferer. The Jewish priests were baptized with the blood of that typical victim. Here the Priest is himself the sacrifice and the sufferer—he is baptized and initiated into the high honours of his office with his own blood. He is made perfect by suffering, and “enters in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

*Daughter.* And has he not made all his genuine followers “kings and priests unto God, “and his Father?” Yes, and it is wondrous mercy! When he calleth a sinner by his grace, he cometh “not by water only, but by water “and blood”—he makes him to partake of “the “washing of regeneration”—sheds upon him “the unction from the Holy One, and gives him “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness “of sins.” This seems to open to my mind that saying of the Apostle, (1 John v. 8.) “There are “three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit “and the water and the blood : and these three



“agree in one.” Happy Christian, who is thus *washed and sanctified “and justified!”* What should be his temper and his life! Blessed Saviour, this is to baptize as never man baptized!

*Son.* Now, I think, I see more clearly than ever, the meaning of our Lord’s reply to the two sons of Zebedee, when their mistaken carnal minds were aspiring after the highest honours of his kingdom. “Jesus answered them, Ye know “not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the “cup that I shall drink of? and to be baptized “with the baptism that I am baptized with? “They say unto him, We are able. And he saith “unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, “and be baptized with the baptism that I am “baptized with—.” How little they knew of the nature of Christ’s kingdom, and of the manner in which his chosen servants are initiated to its high honours! What different views had they when, in *the light* which miraculously shone from heaven on the day of Pentecost, they contemplated the consecration of their great Leader: and when themselves were called to pass through a train of sharp and agonizing sufferings in their way to the kingdom!

*2d Son.* Then I perceive, that the way to the *crown* is by the *cross*—and that, “through “much tribulation we must enter into the king- “dom.” Many have been discouraged because of the way. Yet how have their sorrows been forgotten when favoured with a foretaste of

heaven. The "Man of Sorrows" once felt the burden very heavy—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death!" But, even in the near views of that bloody conflict, while looking beyond the horror of darkness, and realizing "the joy that was set before him," how did his spirit triumph! "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" And when the conflict was over, and he had won the prize, how delighted and satisfied did he look back on the cross and Calvary! "*Ought* not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

*3d Son.* In the strength of his grace, let us "go forth without the camp bearing his reproach." But I have been thinking, where is *plunging* in these baptisms?

*Father.* It is entirely excluded. It is excluded from our Lord's baptism of *water* by John. That was his initiation to his work and ministry on earth, and answers to the washing of Aaron and his sons at their admission to the priestly office. But the priests were not dipped, but washed with water taken from the sanctified laver, and poured upon them, or applied unto them in some other form of ablution. It is excluded from our Lord's baptism of *the Holy Ghost*. For, like the anointing oil, at the consecration of the priests, "the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and lighted upon him." And excluded from his baptism of *blood*, by

which he was made perfect for, and consecrated unto, the higher honours of the heavenly sanctuary. This answers to the application of the blood of "the ram of consecration" to the hand, the ear, and the foot of Aaron and his sons. The one is the figure, the shadow, the simile; the other the substance, the antitype, the truth. There is *similitude* between them. Therefore, in this awful baptism, the adored Jesus was not plunged in blood, but his precious blood, flowing freely from his heart, imbued his sacred body, and stained all his raiment. The ransom was paid—Divine justice satisfied—Jesus was made a great High Priest, "able to save to "the uttermost all that come unto God by "him."

*3d Daughter.* Blessed Jesus! "thou art "fairer than the children of men"—"all thy "garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia"—"thy name is as ointment poured forth." And no wonder—for thy "love passeth knowledge"—thou hast "washed us from our sins "in *thine own* blood!" and "with *thy* stripes "we are healed!"

*Father.* We have contemplated the last baptism of our Lord, in the price of pardon he fully paid. Sometimes, at the foot of Calvary, my imagination has taken another view of it. It has appeared a baptism of *fire*, as well as of *blood*. Eternal justice dealt with him as the sinner's representative. "He hath made him "to be *sin* for us." Hence was the agony of

his soul—the agony that so oppressed and convulsed his frame that “his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Such was the surprizing *effect*. The baptism, if this view of it be admitted, was the distressful *cause*. What must that cause be which could produce this effect? Not the impression of expected evils from earth or hell. Many a *servant* of Jesus has met the greatest of those sufferings with a smile: and endured the bloody conflict with invincible courage; and even with triumph. And is the *servant* greater than his *Lord*? But here is the mystery. Jesus “bore the sins of many.” “He gave himself to God *an offering and a sacrifice* of a sweet smelling savour.” Then, view the offerings, the *burnt-offerings* especially, under the law. And, on various occasions, you will see a very striking representation of this wonderful baptism. When the victim was presented upon the altar, “behold the goodness and severity of God!” Vindictive Justice, that might have plunged its sword of unquenchable fire into the bosom of the guilty offerer, accepts the substitute—falls in unrelenting flame, and consumes the offering. This vicarious offering prefigured “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” This burning flame represented that infinite wrath, the just punishment of sin, which fell tremendous on the holy soul of Jesus. *Devouring* flame, it could not be. “The bush burned, and was not consumed:” because

“ the Lord was there.” Eternal Justice, inflexible in its demands, received full satisfaction. Blood divine prevailed to quench the flame—to silence the loud thunders of the law. “ The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake !” He smelt a sweet savour of rest in that sacrifice. And the sinner’s broken heart is charmed with the voice of his Surety proclaiming—“ It is finished !” “ I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for ever—more, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.”

*Daughter.* “ Hail great Immanuel, all Divine !” “ They that know thy name will put their trust in thee !” “ Never was sorrow like unto *thy* sorrow.” Never love like thine ! What a baptism was this ! Yet, amazing grace !—“ I *delight* to do thy will, O God.” And, “ How am I straitened till it be accomplished !” Well might such a Leader say, “ And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” That must indeed be a hard heart, that can resist love like this.

“ His worth did all the nations know,  
Sure the whole earth would love him too.”

*Father.* “ I beseech you therefore,” my dear children, “ by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God ; which is your reasonable service.” Follow your Leader. “ If you

“suffer with him, you shall be glorified together.”

*Daughter.* And is it possible that I should “be baptized with the baptism that he *was* baptized with?” In the sight of that altar, and that lovely and adorable sacrifice viewed by faith, my heart feels as if bound—“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

*Father.* Love so amazing, my dear child, I hope, would constrain you to be willing to follow your suffering Saviour—nay, and to esteem it an honour to share the reproach of his cross. But you will remember, the cup which he was pleased to put into the hands of the Apostles, and which he may cause you to taste, is very different from his own. *His* was a cup of fury—of unmingled bitterness. *Yours* is a cup of blessing—it is salutary and beneficial—it is prepared by paternal wisdom and love. Your Lord was baptized with drops of fiery wrath. His Apostles were baptized with the Holy Ghost descending in a flame of love—a flame that penetrated and enlightened, that warmed and purified their hearts. In the baptism of our adored Surety, the price of redemption was paid, wrath appeased, the hand-writing that was against his people cancelled. In the baptism of the Holy Ghost the great *blessing* of the covenant cometh upon us Gentiles. The *formal manner* of water baptism is seen in the one and the other. There is nothing forced in these repre-



sentations. They rise, naturally, one out of the other.

*Daughter.* I believe, Sir, we are all satisfied, that the testimony of the Spirit of Truth favours the practice of baptism by pouring, or sprinkling. This testimony demands our grateful "Amen!" In this, and in other appointments, we can "taste and see that the Lord is good." "His commandments are not *grievous*." With fatherly mercy, he condescends to the infirmities of the weak; and lays upon them no more than they can bear.

*Father.* It is good, indeed, to admire the tender mercy that is found in this appointment. For, though the Lord's redeemed people would desire to "walk in all his commandments and ordinances;" yet, were plunging essential to baptism, and this the only way to the Lord's table, there are those who, while they greatly need, and would especially prize, the provisions of the sanctuary, would find it a strait, if not an impassable gate. Many years I knew, and often, with concern, regarded a pious daughter of Baptist Parents, who, in a state of much bodily infirmity and suffering, needed the cordials of that sacred feast, and seemed to say, "With desire, have I desired to eat this passover with you;" but human authority in the Church of Christ had established a rule, which like the cherubim's flaming sword at Eden's gate, effectually kept and barred the way; her physician having fully stated his opinion that, in her



peculiar situation, immersion must endanger her life.

*Daughter.* Blessed Jesus! This door could not be of *his* appointing. "He knoweth our frame." "*He* will not break the bruised reed." "*He* is touched with the feeling of our infirmities." "*He* bears the lambs in his arms"—tenderly sustains the feeble, and "comforteth them that are cast down." Not Jesus, but some of the *disciples* have established such rules. Pity but they had better remembered the angry frown and severe rebuke with which a temper like this had long since been reproved.

*Son.* I cannot regard such an ordinance of men, but with astonishment and grief. Surely, *they* assume too much who so far claim dominion over the faith of others, as to establish a rule, whereby a loving and obedient child of God is necessarily excluded from his, or her, Father's table.

*Father.* You cannot regard such a measure, my son, with greater concern than I do. None but very substantial reasons can justify the exclusion of a disciple of Christ from the sacred supper. Whom the Master of the house has accepted, and sealed with the Spirit of adoption, and whose conduct is without reproach, I think no man, or society of men, ought to reject. Such authority, though often asserted, does not appear ever to have been delegated. Had there been any thing essential, even to visible church-

membership, in the mode of baptism, our Lord, beyond a doubt, would have been explicit in his instructions concerning it. But his only direction, on record, is expressed in general terms, and evidently indefinite. From all eternity it was decreed, that the holy religion which our Lord came to establish should be universal, and we hope the period is fast approaching when "all nations whom he hath made shall come and worship before him and glorify his name." To imagine, therefore, that our Lord intended absolutely and immutably to bind down his followers, *of all nations, and of every climate*, whether intensely hot, or *intensely cold*, to baptism by immersion, is quite repugnant to that mild, that generous and free spirit which his religion every where breathes. "I will have mercy," says our adorable Redeemer, "and not sacrifice."—It is a yoke that he never came to bind on the neck of any of his disciples. It is contrary to that law of liberty which the Apostle affirms the Gospel to be. He declares that it is not meat and drink, *i. e.* it stands not in things ceremonial, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and he that in these serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and ought always to be approved and received into communion by men, whether he has been dipped or not. It seems matter of doubt whether baptism had, explicitly, any place in the instructions given to *the Apostle Paul*. For he says, (1 Cor. i. 17.) "Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to

“preach the Gospel.” In determining the question, the wisest and the best of men have long been divided. Therefore, “let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind.” Let no one “lord it over God’s heritage?” or presume, by any human regulations, to aggrieve tender consciences; making that essential to church-fellowship which is not clearly made so by Divine appointment.

Mr. Bunyan, though a Baptist, severely censures his brethren who made baptism the occasion of “separating between the righteous and the righteous.” “Nay,” says he, “you make want of light therein a ground to exclude the most godly from your communion; while every novice in religion shall be received into your bosom, and be of esteem with you, because he hath submitted to water baptism.” He charges this procedure with having “been heart-breaking to many a gracious soul, a high occasion of stumbling to the weak, and a reproach to the ways of the Lord.” With apparent indignation he expostulates—“Is it not a wicked thing to make bars to communion, where God hath made none? Is it not a wickedness to make that a wall of division between us, which God never commanded to be so?” “I am bold,” he adds, “to have communion with visible saints, because God hath communion with them; whose example, in this case, we are strictly commanded to follow.” “Receive ye one another as Christ

“ hath received you, *to the glory of God!*”  
 “ To the glory of God,” adds he, “ is put in on  
 “ purpose to shew what dishonour they bring to  
 “ him, who despise to have communion with  
 “ such *who*, they know, do maintain communion  
 “ with God.” This determination he repeats—  
 “ I am for communion with *saints*, because they  
 “ are *saints*. I shut none of the brethren out  
 “ of the church, nor forbid them that would re-  
 “ ceive them. I say again, Shew me the man that is  
 “ a visible believer, and that walketh with God;  
 “ and though he differ from me about baptism,  
 “ the doors of the church stand open for him;  
 “ and all our heaven-born privileges, he shall be  
 “ admitted to them \*.”

2d Son. A weighty censure indeed! united with a sentiment truly Christian. When will the day come, wherein “ the Lord alone shall  
 “ be exalted” in his church, and his authority be no more invaded!

To me, it appears not a little strange that good men should, with so much zeal, contend for immersion. Am I wrong, Sir, in imagining that there is something in the practice that is *opposed to civilized manners*, and that does violence to the feelings of a chaste and delicate mind? The idea struck me, in our last conversation, when you remarked, that among “ the divers baptisms” of the Jews, there is

\* See Differences about Water Baptism no Bar to communion. Fol. Ed. pp. 78, 81, 86, 87, 94, 101.

found no one wherein *one man was plunged by another.*

*Father.* The impropriety seems much greater in reference to the *daughters* of men. Indeed, I believe, in a *civil* respect, and in refined society, the promiscuous dipping of men and women, at the same time and place, would rarely be admitted. The delicacy of our age and country, usually at least, has provided against it. In a *sacred* respect, persons, differing in education and habits, will regard the practice with different feelings. Party zeal is the parent of many evils in the visible church. Often it clouds the judgment, contracts the mind, sours the temper, and destroys much good. Zeal for dipping, it appears, has sometimes issued in the extreme of superstition: and decency has become its victim.

*3d Son.* I wonder at the *introduction* of immersion in this ordinance; yet suppose it was practised in very early times. What could have given occasion to it?

*Father.* You are, I think, by this time satisfied that the scriptural mode of baptism is by pouring or sprinkling. It does not appear, that immersion was introduced till *superstition and will-worship* began to invade the Church of Christ. It is possible that a misconstruction of those representations given by the Apostle, (Rom. vi. 3—6. and Col. ii. 11.) of the powerful and beneficial *effects of that faith which is professed in baptism*, might contribute to open the way to it. The injurious mistake too, of the

*saving efficacy of water baptism*, availed not a little to widen the door. "If the application of "water contribute to spiritual purification—to "regeneration and salvation, let the washing be "no longer partial. *Dipping* must be preferred "able to sprinkling or pouring."

The connexion between the original mode and the thing signified was no longer considered. The *advantage* of plunging being once admitted, the *necessity* of it followed of course—and that even to superstitious exactness. Superstition had now usurped the throne of the Spirit of truth. And, under its dominion, dipping was pronounced essential to baptism. Nay, and if but a finger escaped the water, the baptism was deemed ineffectual. These representations would be readily admitted by the poor Pagans, newly recovered from gross ignorance, and from the most impure and detestable idolatries. After a while, superstition prevailed against every sentiment of decency. The impropriety of using *any* garment on these solemn occasions was established—even a partial covering was inadmissible in respect of adults, as well as children. Thus immersion became established with that superstition which disgraced the Church of Christ; and continued during the period of popish darkness. Indeed, dipping still continues to be practised in the Greek Church, which abounds with superstition and will-worship.

By and by, Rome began to relax in these requirements. The necessity even of plunging was



no longer urged. The light of truth, in some scattered rays, began to pierce the thick darkness. After a while those rays became collected—the *Reformers* of honoured memory appeared. And, going about to restore the sacraments to the simplicity of their original institution, *they* were the occasion of introducing a change in the mode of baptism. From this time the ordinance was usually administered by pouring or sprinkling. Soon, however, after the Reformation, two different sects of Anabaptists distinguished themselves in Germany; not indeed by acts of piety, for they practised polygamy, and were guilty of the most horrid rebellions. These evils were instantly attributed to the Reformation, to the inexpressible grief of the Reformers. In England, it seems, no church of this denomination was formed till A. D. 1644, when Mr. Blunt went over to Amsterdam to be dipped; in order to be thereby qualified to administer baptism at home. Let but every Baptist Minister reflect, that at the great Assembly at Westminster, there was not a single divine present who avowed his sentiments, and he must, or at least he ought, to be convinced of the propriety of bringing forward with diffidence a question, which from the beginning *has only gendered strife*; and which the best of men have rejected as altogether unscriptural. To speak with an air of self-confidence, and with a warmth of temper, which would lead one to suppose that the Baptists were dipt in hot water instead of cold, is offensive to Christians of an



opposite sentiments, and highly contrary to that spirit of Christian meekness which we should always cultivate as the professed disciples of him who "was meek and lowly in heart." Let it be moreover considered, that the *two thousand* Non-conformists—men who were the glory of their day and generation—men who, from their great piety and biblical learning, were indeed the lights of the world and the salt of the earth; all these "able ministers of the New Testament" lived and died in the full assurance of infant baptism being perfectly agreeable to the Divine mind and will, as revealed in the sacred Scriptures, and had a constant eye to the glorious privileges and precious blessings annexed to it.—Mr. Jesse was pastor of the first Anabaptist Church formed in London\*. Since that time the sentiment has strangely prevailed, and has had the patronage of some venerable names. It is; however, *in itself*, notwithstanding, a *tare of dissention*, planted by that great enemy of the church who cannot endure that Christians should "either hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, or in righteousness of life." For then he knows "that Jerusalem would be a praise in "the earth." Though I would love all, of whatever denomination, who are Christians in deed and in truth, yet I would not countenance or support the errors of any. Were a Particular Baptist on a journey, or so situated that otherwise he could

\* Neal's Hist. Pur. Vol. III. p. 160.

not commemorate the love of Christ his Saviour, I would most cheerfully admit him to my communion; though fully persuaded that under the same circumstances he would exclude me from his, as a Turk or an Infidel, and upon no other ground than that I am not a Baptist like himself. So much do bigotry and party zeal contract even the Christian's soul, making him to forget "that the end of the commandment is "charity," which shall abide for ever, when faith and hope shall be no more.

*Son.* Who could have supposed that this ordinance of Christian purification should have been perverted to such gross impurities? What a strange proneness in the mind of man to corrupt the word and ordinances of Christ! But amidst this change of the *mode*, and these violations of decency, I gather from what has been said, that the *baptizing of infants* was still practised; and I am convinced with you, that it becomes those of a contrary opinion to speak with that becoming modesty, to which hitherto, it is to be feared, they have long been utter strangers.

*Father.* I cannot think of the abuse of Christian baptism without deep concern. It is not possible to describe the injury which, by this means, the church has sustained. Yet evils, perhaps, still greater, have arisen out of the administration of the other sacrament—the Lord's supper. Each of them inestimably beneficial in its native simplicity; but the one and the other made the instrument of superstition, bigotry,

and strife. Yet, amidst these changes in respect of the *mode*, the practice of baptizing infants was uninterrupted. We have already set before you such authorities as are sufficient to satisfy you that infant baptism is no novelty—that it is not the offspring of popish error and superstition—that it was so from the beginning—and that it has for its support “*the pillar and ground of truth.*”

*Son.* Truth, while we have been conversing, has appeared to shine with convincing evidence. I am sure, I have every heart with me when I say, *We are satisfied.* Thanks to “the Father of Lights” for the advantages we enjoy! The Lord recompence the affectionate labours of our faithful instructor, and cause our “profiting to appear unto all men!”

*Father.* Amen! and Amen!\*

\* Long before his happy spirit was called to ascend to his God and their God, Mr. Bowden had the inexpressible happiness of beholding his children “walking in the truth,” each interested in the spiritual blessings of that covenant which in their infancy he so fervently embraced on their behalf.



ADDRESS  
TO  
CHRISTIAN PARENTS  
WHO PRACTISE  
INFANT BAPTISM,

ESPECIALLY TO SUCH AS STAND VERY NEAR TO THE  
AUTHOR IN FAMILY, AND PASTORAL, AND  
FRIENDLY RELATIONS.

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My endeared Family and Friends,

THOUGH the revolution of many years has placed me, in the perilous journey of life, some stages before many of you, I cannot review the conflicts that are past without feeling very tenderly for those who are following after in the same course. Some of you I regard with anxiety, who are but "putting on the harness," while I am just ready to quit the field. Not ashamed of my hope—blessed be God, *the promise* on which his grace long since enabled me to rest my personal and family cares has not disappointed my expectation. Many times, when coming, with a lamb of my flock, to the altar of God, I have been encouraged to rest upon it, as on sure ground. And now it avails for my blessed repose while realizing the last closing

scene: it relieves my cares in respect of those who especially lie near my heart, and inspires a cheerful hope, while "I commend them to God" and to the word of his grace, which is able "to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

And should the mercy that has rescued a feeble trembling mind from arduous cares and anxieties, receive no tribute? Or, shall a pilgrim, after long toiling with perplexities and alarms, be content in having found a happy way of personal relief, and take no thought for those who are advancing to the same perils? Shall he pass with silent gratitude to the grave, and hide his talent in the earth? Rather let him study, as far as grace is given him, to be eyes to the blind, and strength to the weak, and courage to the fearful, and to rouse the careless and comfortless to repair to the well of water that pours its life-giving stream, perhaps unobserved, at their feet.

Then, my dear family and friends, suffer age to speak, and weigh the report of experience. There is no charge more important, or more tender than that of a child. No relation more highly responsible than that of a parent—especially a Christian parent. Nothing promises greater, more extended and lasting benefit than the religious education of children. No nation upon earth is furnished with advantages, in this regard, superior to our own. Herein, our au-

cestors sowed plentifully, and not in vain. They found a rich return in their own souls: and in an eminent degree they were blessings to their families, the church, the nation, and the world. But we are ready with grief to ask, "Where is the blessedness that *they* spake "of?" Among the signs of the times, perhaps, nothing is more to be lamented than the decline of Christian love in this exercise of it. Many (we rejoice to think how many) are united in exertions to keep the vineyards of others—promoting the religious instruction of the children of the poor, and the publication of Gospel-truth at home and abroad; but from how many a breast, agonizing over a child of disobedience, is that piercing confession forced, "Mine own "vineyard have I not kept!" Yet the impiety of a child may doubtless be traced to other causes beside the remissness of parents.

Many have written, and some excellently, on education *generally*. And you, my dear friends, and late-endear'd charge, are furnished with maxims and rules whereby to adorn the youthful mind with every accomplishment proper for the several classes of social life. Those amiable tempers, and virtues and manners, are the adornings of the *man*. Other aims belong to you—you have, by the grace of God, to form the *Christian*. Your profession and your solemn vows call on you to study how to train up your children for God. Yet you often feel discouraged. There is a want of something to give



energy to prayer and endeavour. As Christian parents, you love their souls—your solicitude is that they should be renewed in the spirit of their minds, born from above, clothed with humility, full of love and good fruits, beautified with salvation, beloved of God and put among his children. But you are ready to regard advantages like these with a very uncertain expectation; as if a *ground of hope* were wanting—as if you were out at sea with neither rudder nor compass, and the issue of all your toiling were very precarious. You are apt to turn away with a sigh from the remonstrances of conscience and the admonitions of Heaven, saying—“We cannot give our children grace.” But God has made it your duty to *instruct* and to “*command* your children, and your household after” you. And is it not reasonable to expect that there must be a promise corresponding with such precepts? Does God send men to warfare at their own charges? It is acknowledged *his* power alone can subdue and change the heart: but have you no promise encouraging to your affectionate exertions? Indeed, the blessedness of a sinner converted to God is so great, that without a special revelation, it would have been the highest presumption to expect it. But through the great mercy of God, there is a revelation—a *promise*, precious beyond all estimation—“*a covenant* ordered in all things and sure.”

It is the design of these *Conversations* to explain this *covenant*, in the grant of it to Abra-

ham, and the more delightful publication of it in the Gospel; and to demonstrate the gracious manner in which it regards the families of believers. And this, with a hope to awaken and call forth the energy of Christian zeal in the breasts of parents. Without this covenant, and the discovery of your children's names in the dispensation of it, your attempts could have been *no other than feeble*—you must have regarded the souls of your dear offspring, at best, with distressful unrelieved anxiety. Then, “blessed are the people that know the joyful sound!” Come, my companions, rather my successors in these family cares—come near to mount Zion—listen attentively to the oracles of *mercy* and *truth*. You will hear the eternal God declare—and, “that *you* might have a strong consolation,” his solemn *oath* confirms the word—“I will be a God to *thee*, and to thy *seed* after thee!” You will find that, while in use, under the former dispensation, the seal of that great promise, for two thousand years, was applied, not to parents only, but to their *infant seed*—that, in those solemn transactions, they were cast on their father's God from the womb, and that he challenged a special right to them as *his own*, “*his* sons and *his* daughters”—and that, on several occasions of national covenanting, the Israelites “stood before the Lord with their wives and their little ones.” You will find enough to satisfy you, that *the promise*, which was the ground of their faith, in respect

of their infant seed, was the same with that which is now, with more abundant grace, published in the Gospel — that Christian parents and their offspring with them, are received to the enjoyment of the advantages of the same covenant—"the root and fatness of the" same good "olive tree," from which the Jews, with their children, for unbelief, were broken off—and that, on account of this external covenant-relation, recognized in the sacred initiating ordinance, the seed of *Gentile*, as formerly of *Jewish*, believers are *holy* unto the Lord.

Now, suffer the word of exhortation—consider well the "grace wherein ye stand." Here is a *promise*, large as your heart's desire. It is a gracious overture to you and your households of "things that accompany salvation." It is the eternal word of the eternal God. Full well he knows what *the great work of salvation* is—what mountainous opposition will be found to discourage expectation from ourselves, and proclaim, "Vain is the help of man." And, to suppress the hopeless sigh and rouse the soul to action, he whispers, "Fear not—I am God Almighty, "walk before me, and be thou perfect"—"and "what a God, in his several persons and perfections, can do, a believing heart and an "obedient mind shall find accomplished"—"they shall keep the way of the Lord—." Gen. xviii. 19.

Friends, let us not say, that the word of God has left us without encouragement to attempt the

conversion and salvation of our children. It is an unquestionable truth—salvation, in every view of it, is God's work. We cannot give our children grace. But it is possible to pervert this truth—it may be urged as an apology for indolence and cruel indifference. Are there no means within our power? Is there nothing, relating to their salvation, that we are directed to attempt?—no reason to expect an effectual blessing on the labour of our souls in God's way? Let us not be discouraged till we have set our hands and hearts to the work. Speak unto “the people that they go forward!”

Study *the promise*.—Rightly understood and considered by a parent, it will not fail to put in motion every power and affection of his soul. It is like the prime wheel in a machine. Only let it be disengaged from impediments, and it will put the whole frame into action. See, in that oracle, the eternal Father regarding your dear children with a smile—you will look on them with new affection—your courage will revive—you will apply yourself to the duty you owe their souls with elevated hope.

You ask, Does *the promise*, to a believing parent, amount to an assurance of the salvation of his child? To this we shall answer in several particulars.

First, repeating—We are not now speaking of *the covenant of grace* in the original and absolute form of it, as given to Christ, the Representative of his people; but of the *dispensation of*

*that covenant*, which is expressed in a *conditional form*—a free overture of grace and glory, proposed to the acceptance of sinful men—a hope set before believing parents, to which they are encouraged, by the kindest intimations of mercy, to flee for refuge, with their dear offspring.

Again; It is not a promise made to *believing parents*, and shedding its influence on the households of *believers* merely *as such*—rather, it is a promise made to the *faith of parents*, taking hold of it, pleading it before God, and seeking the blessing of it, in the diligent use of all other means.

Further; It is a promise that never fails on God's part.—If this grace be received in vain, it is because of unbelief. Some would deem it presuming too far to represent this all-important issue as depending only on the entertainment which *parents* give to the promise. Yet, when a parent, standing on this ground, has his heart engaged on the behalf of his child, to “seek “first,” practically and uniformly, “the kingdom “of God and his righteousness,” there are not wanting substantial reasons to justify an expectation that the promise, thus received and improved by the parent, will, in God's time, prove a well of living water in the heart of the child. Abraham is not left to command his children and household in vain. Solomon enforces his counsel with no vague encouragement when, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he says—“Train up a child in the way he should

“go : and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” It is, indeed, a fact not to be disputed, nor too much to be deplored, that many children of believing parents have awfully fallen short of this grace. But who will undertake to determine the cause to which this failure is to be ascribed ? Rather than renew the agony of a bleeding heart by one unnecessary insinuation, we would pray, “ Lord, heal those wounds !—turn those agonizing griefs into joy and praise, by that welcome assurance, ‘ This day is salvation come to this house ! forasmuch as he also is ‘ the son of Abraham.’ ”

There were ancient believers who, in *the promise* found a firm and precious ground. This encouraged them to cast their dear babes on the Lord “ from the womb.” It was this that relieved their sorrows while committing their breathless dust to the tomb. This enabled one of them to chide the falling tear, and confess—“ It is well !”—and another to calm the agony of his spirit, delightfully recollecting—“ I shall go to him—!” Indeed, in respect to these sorrowful occasions, it may be asked, *the promise* excepted, where has the parent *a ground* of hope ? Considerations there are which encourage a pleasant expectation, even with regard to dying infants universally. But *the promise* sheds a rich perfume over the graves of believers and their infant seed, and forms a precious, and, as far as I can discover, the *only ground of believing expectation*.



Nor are believing parents without encouragement to seek and expect the conversion and salvation of those children which are spared for years to come. There were times, in this favoured country, wherein the families of believers were much more generally, than at present, the nurseries of the Church of Christ. Nor is there a doubt but it will again be so, when parents feel more the power of godliness in their own souls—when they apply themselves to seek; with more earnest endeavour, the spiritual interest of their children, and, in all they do, regard and plead and act upon *the promise* with fervent devotion.

Such was the spirit and practice of that excellent man, *Mr. John Baily*, who was born near Blackburn in Lancashire, and minister of the Gospel in New England. In his diary was left this statement of the exercise of his mind when one of his children was to be baptized.—  
 “ I spent some time in offering up myself and  
 “ my child unto the Lord, and in taking hold of  
 “ the covenant for myself and him. It is actually to be done to-morrow in baptism. I prayed  
 “ hard this day, that I might be able, in much  
 “ faith, and love, and new covenant obedience,  
 “ to do it to morrow. It is not easy, though  
 “ common, to offer a child unto God in baptism.  
 “ O that is a sweet word—*I will be a God to*  
 “ *thee, and to thy seed after thee!* No marvel  
 “ Abraham fell on his face at the hearing of it.”

What shall we say?—Into your hands, my en-



deared family and friends, is committed a trust of the most sacred nature. And on the manner in which you are enabled to acquit yourselves herein, depend issues of the most serious and interesting importance. “*The promise is to you*” “and to *your children*.” It is an assurance or grant from God all-sufficient—“I will be a God” “to thee, and to thy seed after thee!” Receive it, embrace it, act upon it, turn it into prayer. It is a wonder-working rod. Take it in your hand when your soul longs to behold wonders of grace wrought in your infant seed—when you even travel in birth again, until Christ is formed in them. Stretch out your hand heavenward—present before God the word on which he has encouraged you to hope—plead, urge the *promise*; “for it is your life”—your everlasting life; and the lives of those who are dear to you as your own souls, are equally concerned here. Engage the partner of your cares to hold up, to strengthen your hands in the Lord—join hand with hand, and heart with heart. Or, if social help be wanting, be instant in solitary prayer—join endeavour with prayer, and be encouraged—God has not forgotten to be “gracious”—“his promise hath *not* failed forever—“more!”

When the return of prayer seems to be delayed, and your heart is ready to complain—“We see not our signs;” remember, “the Lord,” often “*waiteth* that he may be gracious”—“hope in his word.” Go, with the rod, the

firm pillar of your faith, to the great High Priest of your profession—entreat him to lay it up before the Lord—give him your cause to plead, and be of good cheer. “ *He* hath remembered “ his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.” Then, why not hope?—while faithfully and fervently seeking, in the use of means, the blessing contained in God’s own word, why not hope to see the rod budding, the lovely blossoms opening, forming into fruit, and that fruit advancing to maturity? This hope, encouraged as it is in God’s faithful word, is enough to give energy to your heart’s desire and prayer and labour and patient endeavour. That fruit matured would exceed the richest produce of Eden’s garden, and, to a believing household, convert the meanest and most barren lot upon earth, into a paradise.

Suffer the word of exhortation.—The weight of duty lying on parents who have an immortal soul, though but one, committed to their care, is, in the last degree, serious and momentous. The obligation is various, binding, and unalterable. But the promise of the grace of God provides suitable and abundant relief. In the baptism of your child, that promise was sealed—God was pleased to “ confirm it with an oath.” And therein *you* opened your mouth unto the Lord in a solemn engagement—an engagement sealed, witnessed, and recorded in heaven. How solemn a service is the baptism of a child! With how

much inward devotion, self-examination and believing prayer ought it ever to be attended! How sweet those sounds of appropriation therein from Heaven, "My sons and my daughters!" I trust, you can never forget the duty and the privilege expressed in the charge then received—"Take this child, and" tenderly, faithfully, diligently, "nurse it up *for me.*"

How many *motives* and how powerful to engage a parent, especially a godly parent, to be attentive to this tender and sacred trust! Think it not strange that you are asked, *How otherwise can you say that you love your children?* You have been the occasion of their being born under an attainder by which the family inheritance is forfeited, and their very nature corrupted and debased. Their natural state calls for the tenderest compassion, especially from those who are united to them by most endearing ties. They are liable to an entail of death and misery. It is as if the house in which they are sleeping, were in flames. Or, as if the infection of some deadly disease had seized them, by your means. It is a sight to be regarded with an agony of distress and trembling. Then, how is your love expressed? What are you doing for them? Ah, what vain things, under these circumstances, would be the adornings of the body, polite accomplishments, and a house full of silver and gold! "Wherefore spend ye your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" What a poor recompence for

the loss they have sustained! What a strange and ineffectual remedy for the evils to which their never-dying souls are liable! But that which stamps such a procedure with the characters of unkindness, cruelty, madness, is, the grace with which the God of our salvation regards them—the discovery, the overture of life and immortality, of Christ and grace, of heaven and glory, so kindly made to you, on their behalf. Guardians of these dear little ones—too little to act or think for themselves—pause, reflect, what is it your *duty* to do? What does the grace of God invite you to do? What should the tender names of father and mother constrain you to do? Why a moment's delay? “Seize the “kind promise while it waits,” and, under its most encouraging influence, spare no pains, nor cease to plead *for* them, or *with* them, till you can rejoice over them as blessed with the new nature and high privilege of God's dear children.

Should it be the will of God that *your children should die young*, a consciousness of having dedicated them to him in baptism in obedience to his revealed will, and of having faithfully and affectionately laboured for their salvation *will greatly relieve the agony of that parting stroke*. Then will the promise, which had encouraged your prayer, and constrained your endeavour, be found a rich balm to your wounded soul—it will allay every anxious care respecting them—it will present them to your mind,

escaped from sin and sorrow and temptation, and “received up into glory!”

Or, should it be your lot to go on shore before them, and leave them out at sea—leave them to encounter the troubles and perils of this mortal life—*nothing, in the last farewell, will be able so sweetly to relieve the anxiety of your departing spirit*, as the “mercy and the truth” of God—that God under whose wings you have *daily* come, with your endeared charge, to put your trust. His promise, made the ground of your hope, and the directory of your measures, in years that are past, will be found a spring of delightful satisfaction in the last great conflict. It will enable you to rest your own, and your family cares on God’s precious truth—to plead, with Jacob, in the day of his trouble—“Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good!” Or, as the loving Jesus, in bidding adieu to his disciples, and to his church on earth—“Holy Father, keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me!” It will mingle heavenly consolation with the parting tear, while, under its sweet influence, you tell them—“I ascend to *my Father and your Father*, to *my God and your God*!”—“By sacred bonds, my dear children, you are all his. Seek him and he will be found of you—he will put you among his children; and, when father and mother forsake you, the Lord will take you up—*He* will supply all your need—*He* will fulfil all the good pleasure of his good-

“ness, and the work of faith with power. I leave it, therefore, with each of you as my dying charge—*Thine own Friend* and *thy father’s Friend* forsake thou not!” If you need further inducement—

*You can scarcely give a better proof of your love to Christ.* It is the proof our Lord requires—“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? —feed my lambs.”—Remember, these dear children are not so much *yours* as they are *his*. Next to your own souls, they are the most acceptable offering you can present to him. Then, exercise a tender care of them. Train them up for the honours of his holy, happy family. Take pains to have them sanctified by the Holy Ghost.

Nor do I know, *in what way you can more effectually serve the interest of the Gospel*—or, how otherwise you can prove your regard for the kingdom of Christ.—You may have praying and even preaching abilities—you may aid many an excellent institution, in favour of the Gospel, with a liberal hand—but, if a Saviour come into your house, and observe solemn engagements disregarded, and the dear charge neglected, whom he had committed to your trust, to be trained up for heaven, will he not be angry; and, in a manner piercing to your very soul, expostulate—“How canst thou say, I love thee?” Perhaps in some godly ancestor, he planted your family “a noble vine, wholly a right seed;” then, suffer no occasion for *self-reproach*,



should you see your children rising in life, “the degenerate plants of a strange vine.” Would you contribute, in the best manner you can to the increase of the kingdom of Christ? Let it be the desire and labour of your soul to have the cloud of glory to rest on your household—to leave the *covenant promise*, as a family inheritance, unimpaired to your posterity. Then, when *your* eyes are closing in death, *their* light may be shining—when *you* are “gathered home” as a shock of corn in its season, *they* may remain as seed in the earth, “the seed which the Lord hath blessed”—they who see them may acknowledge it, in praise of the Lord God of truth: nay, and even the haters of the Lord may be constrained, with admiration, to confess—“how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” The advantage is great—the hope is animating; you feel it, and, with solicitude, ask—*What is to be done?* And, by what means may we hope to secure to our children, “the good of God’s chosen?”

We will reply to this inquiry when we have premised a hint or two respecting yourselves.

Every one will see that *the instructor ought himself to be taught*. How should “the blind lead the blind?” How should *he* give another a right view of the Gospel who *himself* is not taught of God? Nor will *he* possess a tender and practical solicitude for the salvation of *his child*, whose *own heart* is not brought under the power of Divine Truth.



It is of great importance too, that *children should have an interest in the tender affection of their parents, and that they know it.*—There is affection which God, in his wisdom and goodness, has planted deep in the nature of parents. The grace of God sanctifies this affection, makes it divine. Then it is governed by right reason—“the wisdom that is from above.” Then the yoke of parental discipline is easy—it is rational, it is wise, it is good. Authority is not relinquished or relaxed: but it is tempered with love. The parent will “suffer no wicked thing “before his eyes,” without severe rebuke. Yet he cannot substitute angry words and hasty blows in the place of calm remonstrance and rational chastisement. *Such* measures might be sometimes necessary for his beast, never for his child. *Their* tendency would be to harden the heart, to confirm evil dispositions, and promote slavish fear. *The others* seldom fail to produce grief and shame, and to secure reverence and affection. A parent, who has “the mind of “Christ, will command,” more with the eloquence of tender love, than by stern threats and frowns, “his children and household after him, “to keep the commandments of the Lord.” Happy families, where the sceptre has been committed to such hands! It will soon appear that the parent, by his uniformly wise and tender carriage, has secured the affection of his children—that he is regarded by them as their *friend*, and that they are satisfied that he con-

sulteth their interest and comfort. This will greatly avail towards inclining their hearts to his counsels and instructions. Nor will his commandments be grievous: "Parents, love your children." Let it be wise love, and then there will be no fear of its being excessive and idolatrous.

It is happy, indeed, when natural affection is sanctified by the Spirit of God—when God has planted divine love in the breasts of parents! Then nobler principles and aims direct their measures—they look far beyond "the things which are seen, and which are temporal, to those things which are not seen, and are eternal." Then while they cannot regard with indifference those accomplishments which would secure the esteem of the world, their compassions and anxieties, the spirituality of their converse with them, and the fervour of their prayers for them, fully declare, that nothing can satisfy them but grace in possession, and heaven in prospect. Happy, happy *David*! How blessed in his birth and education! What a thankful, joyful remembrance had he of his godly parent—the pains she took, the prayers she offered for his salvation! "Oh Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, and the son of thy *handmaid*!" Happy *Timothy* too, in his godly mother and grandmother! They knew *the promise*, and had embraced it with "unfeigned faith"—they saw, therein, the gra-

cious regards of their father's God to the child they loved. Their hearts were inspired with hope and joy; they presented him continually before God—they could not rest till he “knew “the Scriptures,” and found and possessed the treasure hidden there.

Never let it be forgotten, that “every good “and perfect gift cometh down from the Father “of Lights.” Therefore, *ever begin and end these engagements with prayer.* “Go in the “strength of the Lord God.” The sun and rain are not more needful to succeed the toil and expense of the husbandman, than the grace and blessing of God are to give effect to the labours of affectionate parents. Remember, “the Lord “is with you while you are with him.” That seed of instruction which is watered by believing prayer, is likely to sink deep in the understanding and the heart. It may be expected that “God will bless the springing thereof.” When once you can see his truth pledged, and your faith can “take hold of *his* strength,” and plead *the promise*, in wrestling prayer, you may pray and look up—pray and faint not. Such believing prayer, like “the bow of Jonathan, “never returneth empty.”

Another precaution is, *Begin with your children betimes.* Bend the ozier while it is young and tender.—Many parents have seen their error in this circumstance too late; who have never thought of caring for the souls of their

children till sinful inclinations were grown into habits, and they were only disposed to spurn at reproof, and hate the counsels and tears and prayers of paternal love. You can scarcely begin too soon. The Spirit of God often begins at a very early period, and produces a wonderful change in little children. Only strive affectionately with them, and pray earnestly and believingly for them, and you will, in many instances, be delighted to observe how sweetly their minds will yield, and their capacities enlarge, to receive instruction. These things premised, we have, in reply to the fore-mentioned inquiry, to say—

In a condescending and affectionate manner, suited to their tender infancy, *address their understanding and their heart, in order to give them an idea of the general principles of natural and revealed religion.*—Introduce them to the knowledge of God, the Creator of the world, of mankind, and of themselves—of his proper character, his glorious holiness, and his several perfections. Lead them rightly to regard the constitution of their own persons—their mortal bodies and their immortal spirits. Apprise them of their relation to God, and of his sovereign prerogative to prescribe rules to his creatures; in order to convince them, that their subjection and obedience is their *reasonable service*.

After this, you will of course give them the particulars of *God's first covenant with man*,

*and the original transgression of our first parents; and acquaint them with the sin and misery resulting thence to themselves, and to all their natural posterity.* Very plainly and seriously apprise them of their own state of sin and misery, and of the danger they are in of perishing for ever.

Hence you will find occasion delightfully to represent to their minds *the surprising grace and love of God towards his sinful creatures, fallen and helpless*—the Eternal Father's love in giving his beloved Son, and entering into a covenant with him for the redemption and salvation of sinners—the love of Christ, in taking our nature and our sin upon him, that he might “give his life a ransom for many”—the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who comes to act the part of an Advocate for Christ with our minds, in order that we might be excited to flee “for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.” You will have pleasure in telling them of the *everlasting covenant* sealed in his death, and of the *dispensation* of that covenant published in the Gospel, for the purpose of inviting sinful men, of every description, into the bond of it.

These are subjects, not of speculation, but of the most interesting and everlasting concernment. You will have, therefore, to address, not their understanding only, but their heart. And on these occasions, if you would expect *them* to feel, you must appear *yourselves* to

feel. If you would move their tender spirits, your own affections must flow with your discourse. Man's original transgression, the sin and misery of his fallen state, the love of God; the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, in its wonderful and various expressions, are subjects by which, in some happy seasons, you may find an entrance into their very souls.

Many a painful occasion will be found of marking the depravity of their nature—of appealing to facts, and tracing the buddings of iniquity to their corrupt root; and shewing them, even to demonstration, that their propensities are evil, their taste vitiated, and that the way of their heart leads to guilt and ruin.

Indeed, *an attempt at religious education that overlooks the fall of man, and his universally depraved and sinful nature, to me appears to promise no essential and final benefit.* “Thus saith the Lord, plough up the fallow  
“ground, that ye sow not among thorns.”

Take pains to convince them, that sin is an *evil*, as well as a *bitter* thing—that it is a tyrant master, and has already maintained its cruel empire too long—that the change must be radical and entire—and, that nothing short of Almighty Power can effect it. In some happy moment you may perceive the captive exile sighing by reason of cruel bondage, and “hasting to be delivered.” It will then delight you, as the herald of the Lord Jesus, to pro-



claim the Conqueror near—to direct their view to him, coming in the chariot of the Gospel, “full of grace and truth;” coming in his ordinances, and waiting even at the door of their hearts for this very purpose—and to assure them, on the testimony of his own Spirit, that, “to as many as receive him, to them *will* he “give power to become the sons of God, even “to them that believe on his name.”

It will now be your concern to tell them, that the God of salvation, as under the former dispensation of the Covenant of Grace, so *now regards the families of his people with peculiar condescension*; and that the wings of his paternal mercy are extended to invite and gather them to himself. Let them know, that, in their early infancy, encouraged by his covenanted mercy, and on the ground of his great and precious promise, you had solemnly given them up to him; and engaged, as far as your influence could go, that they should be entirely and for ever the Lord’s—that their interest in the kingdom of heaven had been recognised, and the engagement, on God’s part and theirs, ratified and sealed in baptism. Tell them, if, in truth, you can, with what fervent gratitude and strong desire, on that most interesting and delightful occasion, on their behalf, you embraced the promise; and, since that time, how often and how fervently you have pleaded the promise; and what a spring of consolation it has been to your careful, anxious minds. Tell them, that now the



promise, with all its vast and eternal treasures, waiteth their acceptance—that it resteth with them to choose their Master and their portion, to confirm or disannul the engagement; to “subscribe with their own hand unto the “Lord,” or renounce their allegiance and burst his bands asunder. Thus set life and death before them. And, in order to secure a wise and happy choice, take pains to cherish in their tender minds a reverence of the majesty of God, his name, his word, his ordinances, and his people; and to convince them, that “the “fear of the Lord, that is wisdom.” Remember, especially, that, in the mind of man, no principle influences and commands so powerfully and so sweetly as *love*; that there is no love like the love of Christ—none so wonderful and constraining; that no object in the whole creation is so powerfully attractive as Christ crucified—no mirror shews, in so strong a light, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the justice and grace of God, the vanity of the world, and the importance of salvation. Take pains in cultivating these sentiments, and in exciting them to action. Very great advantage may be expected.

Your next great care will be, to *put your dear children on the performance of duty*; particularly on the early use of *prayer*.—It will require much pains to give them a right idea of worship—to help them to distinguish between the outward and the spiritual part of duty—and to accompany with gracious affections every ex-

pression of "repentance towards God, and faith "towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Sometimes, on such serious occasions, their tender minds may discover an impression of *fear*—trembling may seize upon them. Then, you will point to "the Hope set before us," and encourage and aid their flight. At other times, you may find the pulse of their affection beat high in *gratitude*, *love*, and *joy*. Then, cherish these utterings of their hearts, and shew them with how much reason the Lord Jesus expects, that, as living sacrifices, they should by these cords of love be for ever bound to his altar. Under some affecting representations, a spring of inward *sorrow* may shew itself. Then, encourage their griefs—bid them "look" again "on *Him* whom "they have pierced, and mourn"—tell them how fit it is that sin should be reviewed with contrition, and a suffering Saviour with sympathy—tell them that Jesus claims these tears as a part of his tribute, and that he is "therefore" exalted at the right hand of God to open these springs, and "give repentance—." Under such impressions, encourage and help them to take into consideration the overture of the Saviour's grace—to weigh, in the balance of right reason, "the unsearchable riches of Christ," of grace and glory, against the sacrifices they must make if they would secure to themselves this goodly heritage. Plead with the souls of your dear children. Plead for Jesus. Set the great promise before them, sealed with his blood, and,

with all its benefits, waiting their acceptance. Nor cease to wrestle with God, and expostulate with them, till, with an understanding, believing, and thankful heart, they have severally “joined themselves to the Lord in a covenant “never to be forgotten.”

These, my dear family and friends, are great matters. They involve a large share of your comfort in life; and the everlasting interest of your offspring stands in near connection with your faithful care of them in these respects. The *obligations of duty* are very serious and strong. You have accepted a solemn trust—the vows of God are upon you; and if your children perish through neglect on your part, “their souls will “be required at your hands.”—But *affection* will furnish stronger motives. The constraints of love will more effectually engage you in this service. You cannot *forget your children*, that you should not have compassion on those dear parts of yourselves. You cannot forget their *frail bodies*. In helpless infancy you bear them in your arms, and carry them in your bosom. And could you leave their precious *souls*, oppressed with sin and misery, to perish unpitied? Could you neglect to apprize them of their danger, and bring them to Jesus, while his arms of mercy, his promise of richest grace, so sweetly invite? Rather let them see, in your tender solitudes—in the pains you take—the gracious words that proceed out of your lips, that you dearly love their souls. Lay up for your de-

clining days the rich consolation found in the testimony of their conscience, while you profess —“ we were gentle among you, even as a nurse “ cherisheth her children: so, being affection- “ ately desirous of you, we were willing to have “ imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God “ only, but also ourselves, because ye were “ dear unto us.” To give energy to your affectionate endeavours and prayers, let me say—

“ *Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,* “ giving thanks unto God and the Father through “ him.”—Remember, he sealed the covenant with his precious blood—he commissioned his apostles and ministers to publish it through all the world—he established it in the heavens, whence its influence descends in showers of blessing: it is “ a rainbow round about *his* “ throne, in sight like unto an emerald,” ever green—a “ new and everlasting covenant.” Then stand before God on this precious ground—bring your offering, the lambs of your flock, to the altar of God, with Calvary in your eye—commit your cause into the hands of this kind Intercessor, when pleading the promise that encourages your hope—and urge this plea, that in the grant of your request will be seen “ the “ travail of his soul,” “ the increase of his king- “ dom,” and the glory of his name.—Another counsel of great importance is this:

Make choice of *the fittest seasons for address- ing the minds of your children.*—Indeed, it is to be expected that a parent, whose heart has

embraced the promise, and who feels an affectionate solicitude respecting the souls of his children, will find, from day to day, many a fit occasion of profitable remark. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth *will* speak." Hence the precept is, "These words which I command thee, shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them to thy children; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Yet there are seasons especially favourable to addresses of this nature. Afflictions and remarkable dispensations of mercy have a tendency to "open the ear to discipline." Times of prevailing mortality and national alarm—of sickness and recovery—of remarkable preservations and escapes, are to be thus improved to great advantage. The vanity of the world and of life, the kindness of friends, and the goodness of God, are subjects that furnish a great deal of instructive and persuasive argument; which a wise and godly parent, in addressing his children, will make vocal. Yet, a concern of this importance deserves and requires an appropriate regular season. In my regard, reason speaks with energy, and experience ratifies its determination—*no season like the evening of the Lord's day*. Then, if ever, the parent's mind, impressed by the devotions of the day, is seriously thoughtful—his heart will be inditing good matter—during the exer-

cise of catechizing, the expression of his lips will savour of the truths he has heard. Children habituated to attention, from the subjects of public discourse, will furnish matter for the most profitable converse. They will need the aid of superior knowledge and experience to open to them the Scriptures—to divide the bread of life, and, by familiar illustrations, break it into parts suited to their years and capacities. Often, on such occasions, while the instructor feels the power of Divine Truth, and regards with pious anxiety the great interest of his children, grace will be poured into his lips; the fire will burn within him; new reflections and arguments will be given; and, in feeding, he will himself be deliciously fed.

Few hours of my life have I to review with warmer gratitude and more cordial satisfaction, than those which through many years were thus chosen and employed. The great mercy of God, which directed me after this manner to improve a portion of the Sabbath evening, I shall have reason to adore while I have any being. True, it was but scattering “a handful of corn on the top of a mountain.” Yet, had I on those occasions been sowing the good seed in a large field of labour, preaching the word in a public congregation, I could scarcely have looked for so rich a harvest as those domestic repetitions and conversations have afforded, and are still promising.

Such, likewise, has been the testimony of our fathers, concerning family instructions at those



seasons. The blessing of the *Most High* richly attended them. They were occasions of large accessions to the churches of the saints.

It is not, however, the design of this statement to recommend the general discontinuance of *Sabbath Evening Lectures*, or discourage their use. In many situations, and in respect of many individual persons, they are much to be desired. But this address is to *parents*—to parents whom the duty and affection of a father, a pastor, and a friend, constrain me to advise. In a matter wherein their own comfort, and the highest interest of their dear children, are very nearly concerned, they have a right to my most matured and unreserved sentiment. And the utterance of my heart on this subject is—

“ Let the hours of the Sabbath evening be  
 “ sacred to the duties of the closet and the  
 “ family. Let nothing—no, not the exhibition  
 “ of some distinguished stranger, ‘ a burning  
 “ and shining light’ in the public assembly—  
 “ divert your faithful care from your little flocks  
 “ within your own domestic folds. Let no-  
 “ thing, short of necessity, ever deprive your  
 “ dear children of their ‘ portion of meat in due  
 “ season.’ ”

We cannot close this serious address to parents without entreating and urging—“ *walk before your house with a perfect heart.*” Children believe their *eyes* much more readily than their *ears*. Let them see your counsels exemplified in your habitual carriage and converse. Let



them not observe *you* inordinately “minding  
 “earthly things,” and following “the course of  
 “the present world,” while you admonish *them*,  
 “seek first the kingdom of God—.” There is  
 nothing, within our power, like the devout and  
 uniform practice of piety, in the closet and  
 family, in the church and the world, to secure a  
 veneration for religion, and win the heart of the  
 young to Christ. The *counsels* of such a pa-  
 rent will have great weight. The *prayers* of such  
 a parent, “full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,”  
 will have great power with God. The cords of  
 sacred obligations and baptismal engagements,  
 fast bound and strengthened by such an edu-  
 cation, will not easily be broken and cast from  
 them.

A beautiful illustration of the proper carriage  
 and the heart of a parent, is given us in that in-  
 structive figure by which the Everlasting Father  
 has condescended to delineate his own paternal  
 character, Deut. xxxii. 11: “As an eagle stir-  
 “reth up her nest, fluttereth over her young,  
 “spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them,  
 “beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone  
 “did lead him, and there was no strange God  
 “with him.” It is a shadow of the wonderful  
 grace of God when he went to redeem his peo-  
 ple Israel. The eagle is here described as  
 “stirring up her nest”—her nestlings—by her  
 loud and inviting call. So the Lord, by the  
 loud cry of his providence in their affliction—by  
 his message and promise by Moses—and by the

kind overture of his grace when he “ lift up his  
 “ hand unto them, saying, I am the Lord your  
 “ God”—stirred and roused them while sleeping  
 in their sins :—“ Awake, awake ; put on thy  
 “ strength, O Zion—!” “ Awake, thou that  
 “ sleepest ! arise from the dead—!”

The eagle “ fluttereth over her young.” So  
 the Lord, by his gracious influence accompanying  
 his word and ordinances and providential  
 dispensations, *fluttereth, moveth* on their lifeless  
 powers. The original is the same as in Gen. i. 2 :  
 “ The Spirit of the Lord *moved* upon the face  
 “ of the waters.” It denotes the motions of  
 God’s Spirit on the souls of men, whereby they  
 are “ quickened to newness of life.”

The eagle “ spreadeth abroad her wings”—  
 as if preparing herself for flight: thereby to ex-  
 cite the endeavour of her young. So the Lord,  
 in his miracles of judgment on the Egyptians,  
 and of mercy to his people, spread abroad the  
 wings of his power ; thereby preparing the way  
 of their escape, and provoking them to “ arise  
 “ and depart!”

The eagle “ taketh” her young, when reluc-  
 tant and lingering, to constrain their flight. So  
 the Lord hastened the departure of Israel. And  
 so the angel took hold of Lot’s hand, and led  
 him out of Sodom.

The eagle “ beareth them on her wings.” Not  
 in her talons, as she beareth her prey, but, on her  
 wings ; and soars aloft, interposing herself be-  
 tween them and danger. So the Lord redeemed

his people, and “bare them, and carried them, “all the days of old.” Thus, long after, he prepared for the woman “two wings of an “eagle, that she might flee into the wilderness”—from the face of the serpent. And so our gracious Redeemer would gather unbelieving sinners, “as a hen gathereth her brood under “her wings.”

By how many lovely images does nature teach and exemplify the practice of parental duties! How much may we see, that seems to chide the languor of our minds in seeking the spiritual and eternal interest of our children! It is true, “power belongeth unto God”—salvation is his work. He chooseth the time, ordaineth the means, and formeth the instrument. Sometimes he grants a signal of mercy in design, by disposing the heart of a parent with a strong bias to choose and seek this good—to “hold fast the “profession of his faith” in the promise—to “continue instant in prayer” for his children—to *stir them up*, by the melodious sound of the Gospel call—to cherish the motions of the Spirit on their minds—to improve all the advantage which his knowledge and experience, his tender relation and affection, give him to influence their choice, and put them upon duty—and, finally, by an affectionate condescension to their infirmities, using all means to “teach them to go; taking “them by their arms;” and going before them, and “drawing them with the cords of a man, “with bands of love.” By such grace given a

parent, God sometimes strengthens his hope and gives rest to his mind. He can sit and sing, "I wait for the Lord: my soul doth wait: and in his word do I hope." And, "blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord!" "*His* going forth is prepared as the morning. He shall come unto us as the rain; as the latter and the former rain unto the earth."

His blessing, my-dear family and friends, with every parent who shall peruse these sheets—the rich blessing of Abraham—be on you and your children! Then will you, from your happy lot, "gather fruit, highly fragrant and delightful," unto "eternal life!"

"And numerous households meet at last  
"In one eternal home!"

Amen, and Amen!

J. B.

Lower Tooting, }  
April, 1808. }

*Soli Deo gloria!*

FINIS.

Received of the Hon. the Secy. of the Navy  
the sum of \$1000.00 for the purchase of  
the ship "Albatross" for the U.S. Navy  
and for the purchase of the ship "Albatross"  
for the U.S. Navy.

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